



March 7, 2023

Representative Helm, Chair
Committee Members
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Subject: Testimony in Favor of House Bill 3231—a Bill to Direct and Fund the Department of Environmental Quality, in Consultation with other State Agencies, to develop recommendations and outreach resources that expanded development of beneficial reuse and land application projects in Oregon

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

My name is Susie Smith; I am Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA). I'm here today to testify in favor of HB 3231 on behalf of ACWA, the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), and the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO). Together, our organizations represent all of Oregon's publicly owned wastewater treatment and stormwater management utilities that provide water quality services across the state.

Wastewater utilities in Oregon face a growing number of water quality challenges as the Clean Water Act compels DEQ to adopt new water quality standards and renew wastewater discharge permits at an increasing rate. For several water quality concerns, like temperature and nutrients, use of treated wastewater to sustain natural infrastructure like wetlands and riparian areas, or to support agricultural or industrial process water needs, can be a cost-effective water quality solution that maximizes benefits to the environment, farmers, and industries, and can conserve or reduce withdrawals of fresh water from stressed surface or groundwater sources.

Existing state policies expressly direct state agencies to improve regulatory programs that support and promote water reuse, and to work together to overcome institutional, regulatory, and funding constraints. But competing demands on state agency resources to meet core regulatory mandates have left a long overdue modernization of the state's regulatory framework a goal that is more aspirational than implementable. Many communities in Oregon have successfully developed recycled water or natural infrastructure projects. Others have wanted to but have struggled to develop or have given up on exploring these projects under the current regulatory framework, because they've found it to be too difficult, complex, and costly to navigate.

HB3231 will provide needed funding and direction to DEQ to consult with other state natural resources agencies and the wastewater utilities to identify regulatory impediments that are unnecessarily deterring development of water reuse and other beneficial land application projects. HB3231 will also direct DEQ to look to fellow water protection agencies in states like California and Florida, which have environmentally protective regulations that have catalyzed development of

significant recycled water resources. Finally, HB3231 will require tangible results in the form of recommended policy and guidance changes, as well as technical assistance and outreach resources.

As the state continues to tackle ever increasing pressures on water and the environment, local communities can help meet state goals for improved water quality, sustainable water supplies, and environmental and economic benefits by using treated wastewater for beneficial purposes. HB3231 will help the state in setting the stage to capture more of the many potential benefits of treated wastewater when it can be applied to its highest and best purpose.

For your reference, I have also submitted to the record of this hearing additional background information on HB3231.

We urge your support for this bill and we are available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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