



Tillamook County Board of Commissioners

201 Laurel Avenue, Tillamook, OR 97141

Phone: 503-842-3403

TTY Oregon Relay Service

Erin D. Skaar, Chair

March 8, 2023

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Erin Skaar and I am the Chair of the Tillamook County Board of Commissioners. I am pleased to submit my testimony today in support of HB3163 Place-Based Water Planning Fund, the establishment of which will provide much needed funding to support regions in conducting this important work.

Tillamook County is known as the land of many waters and I would suggest is generally thought of as one of the least likely places to struggle with water issues other than occasional flooding. While that may have been true historically, we are seeing changes begin to take place across the county. We are seeing amounts of rainfall exceed historical norms over very short periods of time, while seasonal totals remain fairly constant. We are having longer periods of warm dry conditions in between the periods of rainfall. These changes in how we get our rainfall bring questions about how the corresponding natural systems of both surface water and ground water are functioning.

Other coincidental data suggests that our systems may not be functioning well. Our residents are seeing changes in water availability as we see many of our water districts that provide drinking water to our unincorporated communities post save water notices during the summer months. Our fishermen are reporting lower warmer river flows and greater instances of fish disease and die off.

All of these examples, while not yet catastrophic, are concerning. They may be the canaries in the coal mine, so to speak. It seems that the next reasonable step for us to take as a county is to assess our local natural water systems, but we just don't have the resources without a catastrophe to trigger some kind of funding.

HB3163 (with a coming amendment I believe) provides a funding mechanism for counties like mine to be pro-active in engaging with scientific data, with the water resources division, with our stakeholders, and with our residents. With these funds we wouldn't have to wait until it is too late. I strongly urge your support of HB3163 with coming amendments.

Sincerely,

Erin D. Skaar, Chair