

March 9, 2023

To: Representative Ken Helm

Re: Initial multi-stakeholder support for HB 3099

We are writing to thank you for your ongoing work on HB 3099 and to express our interest in continuing to work with you to develop and refine this legislation supporting a multi-stakeholder collaborative process to improve water conservation and management for Lake Abert and the Chewaucan River watershed. We collectively support the -1 Amendment, with the recognition that we are still refining the language and will be working on a -2 Amendment and seeking consensus support of all involved parties before this moves forward.

In early 2022, news coverage about the drying of Lake Abert catalyzed a series of conversations, meetings, tours and other activities among multiple stakeholders, agencies and elected officials. In early 2023, Oregon Consensus and Oregon State University completed a stakeholder assessment and recommended the initiation of a balanced, inclusive, multi-stakeholder collaborative process to address the conservation and management issues. The collaborative process would focus on developing a shared understanding of water management in the region and identifying ways to meet in-stream and out-of-stream water needs, to improve the ecological health of Lake Abert and the larger Chewaucan River watershed, and to support agriculture, communities, and habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species.

HB 3099 would provide funding for this collaborative process and the technical capacity necessary to support a robust understanding of the ecology, hydrology and various water needs in the region. Although the issues in the region are complex and durable solutions will take time to develop, we believe that the investment in collaborative process and technical support will help the proposed collaborative develop practical, science-based solutions to the challenging water problems facing Lake Abert, the Chewaucan River watershed and the communities that depend on this important resource.

We appreciate your continued work on HB 3099 and look forward to working with you in the future to refine and move this legislation.

Sincerely,

Alphabetical order by last name

Tess Baker, Chewaucan Watershed Collaborative (CWC) member

Lisa Brown, WaterWatch of Oregon, Staff Attorney

Theo Dreher, Oregon Lakes Association, President

Ryan Houston, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Executive Director

Autumn Muir, Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council, Uplands Coordinator (advisory to CWC)

Larry O'Neill, Director of the Oregon Climate Service, State Climatologist of Oregon, OSU

Barry Shullanberger Lake County Commissioner

Marty St. Louis, Retired Summer Lake Wildlife Area Manager (advisory to the CWC)

Teresa Wicks, Eastern Oregon Biologist, Audubon Society of Portland

Colleen Withers, Lake County Umbrella Watershed Council, Program Manager (co-chair of the CWC)

Matt Withers, Rancher (member of the Chewaucan Watershed Collaborative)