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March 22, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 2929

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

Thank you for opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2929. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is an Oregon non-profit, public interest organization of about 700 members. Its offices are located in Bend, Oregon. LandWatch’s mission is to defend and plan for Central Oregon’s livable future, and it has advocated for the preservation of natural resources in Central Oregon for over 30 years.

LandWatch supports HB 2929. As Oregonians grapple with the impacts of climate change, and drought conditions are becoming a more common and frequent stress on our communities and rivers, ensuring for the lawful use of water is paramount. By providing Oregon Water Resource Department (“OWRD”) with the authority to seek injunctive relief where information clearly demonstrates illegal water use, HB 2929 gives OWRD an important tool to stop water use violations.

LandWatch is a member of the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative (“DBWC”), a body working to meet the water needs in the Deschutes Basin for agriculture, municipalities and rivers. In 2019, an effort funded by the Bureau of Reclamation and State of Oregon Water Resources Department, and developed in partnership with the DBWC, led to publication of a report on water supply, demand, and management options in the Deschutes Basin. The 2019 study—known as the [Upper Deschutes River Basin Study](#)—outlines broad management strategies to address water shortfalls for agriculture, municipalities and instream needs across the basin, finding that the total median shortages for instream and agricultural needs each year are approximately 200,000 – 500,000 acre-feet, depending on whether it is a wet or dry year. In short, we currently do not have enough water to meet our existing water needs and illegal water use only exacerbates the water challenges facing our communities and rivers.

LandWatch supports HB 2929.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Austin
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