

March 23, 2023

TO: Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

**FROM: Bob Rugar Annie Byerley
Nathan Rea Tim DeRuwe
Joe Frazier Dennis Rea
John Warinner Martin Clubb
Ormand Hilderbrand Peter Warinner
James Baker
Ray Williams**

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of SB 956-2

Chair Manning and members of the Committee, we write in support of Senate Bill 956-2.

We are members of Washington Oregon Water (WOW), a newly formed collaborative group of agricultural water users who farm in the Walla Walla Valley. WOW members reflect a thriving agricultural sector that is foundational to the local economy.

Like many basins in the American West, water uses for surface water and groundwater in the Walla Walla basin are fully allocated during the times when water is most needed. That reality, combined with the impacts of climate change and the complexity of having the basin's water management split between the States of Oregon and Washington, places significant challenges on the basin to address long-term water needs for the economy, community, and environment.

WOW supports collaborative efforts to secure a water supply that balances the Walla Walla Valley's ecosystem health with the continued economic growth and prosperity.

SB 956-2 represents an important step toward helping meet the basin's long-term water needs by:

- Directing the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to work with the State of Washington, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and local stakeholders to work toward cooperative, bi-state water management through the Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan;
- Signaling the intent that the State of Oregon will share in the cost of implementing the Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan;
- Directing OWRD to work with the State of Washington and the CTUIR to assess the development of a bi-state legal framework for the allocation, distribution, and management of developed water in the Walla Walla basin; and
- Directing OWRD to periodically update the Walla Walla Basin Advisory Committee on the development of the bi-state legal framework prior to reporting to the Oregon Legislature by June 30, 2025.

SB 952-2 will encourage collaborative efforts and local engagement to address long-term water needs in the Walla Walla Valley.

We urge the Committee to support SB 956 and pass the bill with the -2 amendment.