



COALITION OF OREGON LAND TRUSTS

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April 3, 2023

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

RE: Support for HB 2813 and HB 3195; Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT), we thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today in support of HB 3124 and would like to congratulate all the members and staff that worked on the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package (BiDRAWS).

The Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts (COLT) is a network of 32 organizations working in Oregon to protect our natural world - our water, wildlife and open space - for all people, forever. Our statewide community of land trusts cover coastal geographies from Gold Beach to Astoria, and are actively working with communities and water suppliers to ensure secure and safe drinking water using voluntary, market-based tools.

Oregon's drinking water challenges will become more complex as our built infrastructure ages, climate change and wildfire add uncertainty, and tourism trends change with populations surges to places like the Oregon coast in the summer.

Specifically, we would like to voice our strong support for the following components of the BiDRAWS Package:

- #1-4: OWRD Tribal Liaison (POP 112)
- #1-6: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Water Rights Settlement (POP 115)



24 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS: Blue Mountain Land Trust • Center for Natural Lands Management • Columbia Land Trust
Deschutes Land Trust • Ducks Unlimited • Forest Park Conservancy • Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust
Greenbelt Land Trust • Klamath Lake Land Trust • Lower Nehalem Community Trust • McKenzie River Trust
North Coast Land Conservancy • Northwest Rangeland Trust • Oregon Agricultural Trust • Oregon Desert Land Trust
Pacific Forest Trust • Southern Oregon Land Conservancy • The Conservation Fund • The Nature Conservancy in Oregon
The Trust for Public Land • The Wetlands Conservancy • Wallowa Land Trust • Western Rivers Conservancy • Wild Rivers Land Trust

8 ASSOCIATE MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS: Black Oregon Land Trust • Cerro Gordo Land Conservancy • Clackamas Soil & Water
Conservation District • East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District • Helvetia Community Association
Tualatin Soil & Water Conservation District • View the Future • Yamhill Soil & Water Conservation District

- #3-1: CWSRF Loan Eligibility (HB 3195)
- #3-2: Drinking Water Source Protection Fund (HB 2813)

HB 2813 is a bipartisan bill that will help ensure secure and safe drinking water for communities across Oregon. While for some communities, clean water is as easy as turning on the tap, a growing number of Oregon communities face challenges accessing clean, reliable, and affordable drinking water. **HB 2813 adds an important tool for Oregon to protect the infrastructure that provides drinking water by preventing the fragmentation and conversion of source water areas.**

As organizations with expertise in land conservation and real estate transactions, our land trust members are uniquely positioned to help water providers protect and enhance community water sources.

North Coast Land Conservancy, for example, worked with the Arch Cape Domestic Water Supply District and Sustainable Northwest to acquire 1,500 acres and establish the Arch Cape Community Forest. This land is now permanently protected and managed as a community forest that provides multiple benefits including affordable, clean and safe drinking water, stabilized water rates, and conservation opportunities.

In the City of Port Orford Oregon, the Port Orford Watershed Council and Wild Rivers Land Trust have been working hand-in-hand with the City to identify ways to secure their drinking water, including purchasing more land to protect their water at its source. In the small community of Ilwaco, the Trust for Public Land and Columbia Land Trust supported project planning, financing, and conservation planning to support the city as they manage their watershed.

One of the critical missing pieces of this work is the financial resources for small communities to acquire and protect their drinking water sources. HB 2813 will fill a key financial gap to provide capacity and funding for source water projects across the state and leverage federal infrastructure funding. While some communities are already engaged in this work, many lack the capacity to tackle source water protection alone - operating with small or all-volunteer staff, limited budgets with few ratepayers, or serving low-income populations.

We are also supportive of the inclusion of HB 3195 (#3-1) in BiDRAWS. This bill would expand the entities eligible for Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) loans, a key source of funding to secure clean water in Oregon. Land conservation that prevents contamination of drinking water sources can be a particularly impactful tool for communities to ensure clean and reliable drinking water. While land conservation is eligible for CWSRF assistance, these types of projects have generally not been able to access funding through the program.

One limiting factor is the narrow range of entities eligible to borrow under the program, which currently only includes entities that serve a pollution control function. This excludes entities such as water providers, which are often best positioned to implement land acquisition projects that address non-point sources of pollution. As one of the only programs in Oregon that funds land



acquisition projects with the purpose of addressing the quality of Oregon's drinking water sources, the CWSRF is a critical resource for communities in protecting their water supply.

Oregon must act now to leverage unprecedented federal funding and ensure drinking water security for our communities. HB 2813 and HB 3195 are critical components of the BiDRAWS package and will provide strategic tools for long-term water security now instead of dealing with a water availability crisis later. We urge the members of this committee to support these priorities, and thank you for the time to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelley Beamer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelley Beamer
Executive Director
Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts

