Senator Michael Dembrow, Co-Chair
Representative Khanh Pham, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

March 30, 2023

**RE: Support for Addressing Nonpoint Source Pollution under DEQ POP 124 "Supporting Watershed Restoration Efforts"**

Dear Co-Chairs Dembrow and Pham, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) budget bill (HB 5018) in support of funding for DEQ Policy Option Package 124 "Supporting Watershed Restoration Efforts."

The Wild Salmon Center is a nonprofit organization based in Oregon that works to protect and restore salmon habitat and advocate for policies and programs that improve water conditions in streams where salmon have the best chance of recovery. Oregonians across the state need reliable access to cold, clean water that supports healthy communities, thriving fisheries, forests, and farms, and sustainable livelihoods. Unfortunately, impaired water quality from polluted runoff combined with low flows are stressing even our strongest salmon runs, and these problems are worsening due to climate change and increased human demand for water. Polluted runoff, also referred to as nonpoint source pollution, occurs when water flows along farm fields, city streets, or forestlands and picks up pollutants, such as pesticides, sediment, or nutrients, before ultimately flowing into local rivers and streams. In salmon strongholds and in watersheds across the state, nonpoint source pollution significantly impacts the state's cold, clean water resources.

DEQ POP 124 provides $1.1M in critical funding to support the state's ability to address nonpoint source pollution, particularly through the development and implementation of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). Specifically, POP 124 would establish four new positions and restore one position within DEQ to support development and implementation of TMDLs, as well as coordination with delegated management agencies such as Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). Required by the federal Clean Water Act, a TMDL is effectively a clean-up plan for the most impaired rivers, lakes, and streams to restore those waters to meet water quality standards. Oregon currently has 25 high or medium-priority TMDLs that include 10,651 impaired assessment units.[1] Each of these impaired assessment units can range from less than 1 mile to more than 200 stream miles.[2] In response to litigation (*NWEA*

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[1] Agency Request Budget 2023-25, Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Policy Option Package 124 Narrative, P. 610.

[2] Oregon's 2022 Integrated Report, Available online
<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/88524b36780f4a4f8169d9f2a699da33>.

*v. EPA, 2019)*, Oregon is in the process of replacing 14 TMDLs and updating 4 additional TMDLs for temperature that were issued by DEQ and approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) between 2004 and 2010.[3]

Particularly in the context of drought and a changing climate, support for DEQ to address water quality challenges is critical. This is reflected in the inclusion of POP 124 in the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package (HB 3124), in combination with funding to support core components of Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Agricultural Water Quality Program under ODA POP 320. We support the inclusion of these POPs in the drought package (HB 3124) and the opportunity to include POP 124 specifically in DEQ's budget as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment in support of full funding for DEQ POP 124 "Supporting Watershed Restoration Efforts."

Sincerely,

Stacey Detwiler
Oregon Policy Senior Program Manager
Wild Salmon Center

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[3] Temperature TMDL Replacement Project. Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Available online < https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/tmdls/Pages/tmdlreplacement.aspx >.