



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 30, 2023

To: [Co-Chairs Senator Michael Dembrow and Representative Khanh Pham](#)
[Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources](#)

Re: [HB 5018](#) – Dept. of Environmental Quality Budget – **Comments**

The League of Women Voters has strong positions on both water quality and quantity, as well as air quality, solid waste, and hazardous waste. **We also believe it is past time to address the existential threats of our time: our changing climate and injustice around disadvantaged communities.**

LWVUS was active in encouraging passage of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts and continues to advocate to protect that foundational work. We also advocate for federal funding to implement that legislation, an issue of grave concern today. In Oregon, League members have studied these issues, recognizing the value of having clean air, clean water, and land for public health for today and generations to come. With that background, we provide testimony on DEQ's proposed budget.

We support the General Fund, Lottery Fund, and fees for the base budget/activities of the department. The General Funds in this budget, as well as permit fees, protect Oregonians' health and support our economy. Increased investment is necessary to reflect the responsibilities of the agency. We also support the POPs requested by the Governor and note a few specifically, as well as some from the ARB that were not included.

Climate and Environmental Justice Policy

- POP 114: Supports implementation of the Climate Protection Program and the Clean Fuels Program (\$1.6 million).
- POP 115: Supports the implementation of the Community Climate Investment program (\$500,000 GF and \$1,049,039 OF and 4 FTE).
- POP 140: Supports Environmental Justice coordination (\$750,340 GF and 1.5 FTE).
- POP 142: Supports state and federal grant coordination (\$449,717 OF and 2 FTE).
- POP 110: Supports implementation of Title V of the federal Clean Air Act, which regulates emissions from the largest sources of air pollution (\$3,580,269 OF and 11 FTE).
This issue is of critical concern for Oregonians and businesses. Oregon needs to maintain ability to regulate this program. The League believes that a systematic review of ALL fee programs is needed so that large fluctuations do not occur in the future. Director Feldon's explanation of the breadth of our air quality permitters was helpful. They do multiple tasks, including outreach, education, technical assistance and other important chores while also doing site visits and learning about each business and—by the way—writing permits that are scientifically accurate and within the bounds of air quality rules.
- POP 112: Adds a transportation manager and aids Med./Heavy Duty vehicle charging pilot project (\$957,337).
- POP 141: Maintains Agency Support Staff—critical for the day-to-day operations of the agency (\$2,909,234 OF and 12 FTE).

Water Quality Division Specifically

- POP 126: Protect Drinking Water sources—specifically harmful algal blooms and the Umatilla GWMA (\$1,063,738 GF and 3 FTE).
- POP 129: Effectively Administer Grants and Contract (\$537,045 GF and \$11,815,525 FF/OF limitation and 2 FTE) Critical to assure we are meeting federal guidelines on these significant grant monies. By the end of session, this federal funds amount could be significantly larger and will need more limitation and FTE.
- POP 181 & 191: Clean Water SRF limitation to fund bond issuance for federal funds match. After years of “drought”, Oregonians may begin to see new infrastructure to address old and failing wastewater plants as well as expansion into growth areas.
- POP 162: Complete Replacement of Clean Water SRF software (\$600,000 OF limitation).
- POP 123: Onsite Septic Program (971,536 GF/\$817,664 OF and 3 FTE) LWVOR supported the increase in grants and loans for this program, in particular so that wildfire victims could rebuild with septic systems that protect public health and our clean water sources.
- POP 125: IWRS Planning Positions (\$515,000 GF). As we work to see coordination among agencies to address clean and abundant water for all, DEQ staff is needed to help in that effort. We are supporting a continuation of the Place-Based Planning program in WRD, but DEQ is the water quality agency for that effort.

We recognize the opportunities that may arise with the multiple federal funding opportunities and fully **support the addition of two positions at DEQ to assure we access available federal funds AND have the capacity to administer any grants received.**

We were pleased to hear Rep. Owens’ acknowledgement that cuts proposed in the budget are inconsistent with many of the responsibilities of the agency. We hope you consider **reinstating those proposed cuts** so that Oregon continues to be a safe and healthy place to live and work. We worked hard to assure DEQ’s Water Quality Program finally had staff to begin to reduce permit backlogs. **We must not lose that momentum.** We understand that the GRB cuts about 10 FTE in critical program areas.

And we appreciate Rep. Holvey’s continued mention of the link between Oregon’s environmental agencies’ actions and **loss of NOAA funding.** We continue to be concerned with that issue, not only for DEQ and DLCD, but other agencies and local governments due to bills this session that might undercut Oregon’s ability to regulate to federal standards.

There may be other bills related to the mission of DEQ about which we may well provide comments. After all, **DEQ is at the core of Oregon’s public health and environmental protection.** It has a broad mission that, if fulfilled, affects every Oregonian. Investing in its many responsibilities is money well spent.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation. **We encourage your support for the many missions of this important agency.**



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Cc: [Leah Feldon, Dept. of Environmental Quality Director](#),
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