



DESCHUTES RIVER  
CONSERVANCY

April 8, 2023

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

Re: Input on WRD Budget (HB 5043)

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 5043, the budget for the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) for the 2023-25 biennium.

The Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC) was formed in 1996 by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, irrigation, and environmental interests. The DRC's mission is to restore streamflow and water quality in the Deschutes Basin, and we use collaborative approaches that support the diverse uses of water in the basin. The DRC and its partners have restored significant flows to our basin's rivers while supporting out of stream community uses of water.

The DRC is writing to voice our strong support for the State's continued investment in water resources outlined in the GRB. It is critical that WRD has sufficient funding to carry out its core mission of managing water supplies in the state, both for instream and out of stream use. Specifically, continued investment in agency capacity and data is foundational to this.

In addition to what is in the GRB, we would like to voice strong support for the following:

**POP 111: Water Use, Supply, and Availability Data** (Partially funded in GRB)

We urge full funding for capacity within OWRD to modernize the state's online tool for understanding water availability. With full funding, this investment will protect against further over-allocation of water rights and mitigate future water conflict by developing a transparent, publicly-available water availability assessment that can be improved as new data become available.

**POP 119: Studying springs in the Deschutes Basin** (\$612,000, not included in the GRB)

This POP would provide needed information on springs in the Deschutes Basin, which is a critical component for moving water management conversations forward. This effort will help basin stakeholders identify high value springs, understand the sources of water for these springs and understand the magnitude and causes of impacts on these sources and springs. This information will inform collaborative water planning discussions going on now in the basin.

We also recommend that there are **no reductions to WRD's current service level**. Now is the time to increase, not reduce, investment in water management to ensure that all Oregonians have access to water and the ecosystems that depend on it.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to provide input.

Respectfully,

*Kate Fitzpatrick*

Kate Fitzpatrick  
Executive Director