



April 12, 2023

Senate Committee on Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 3164 - Support

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3164. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is an Oregon non-profit, public interest organization of about 700 members. Its offices are located in Bend, Oregon. LandWatch’s mission is to defend and plan for Central Oregon’s livable future, and it has advocated for the preservation of natural resources in Central Oregon for over 30 years.

LandWatch is a member of the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative, a body working to meet the water needs in the basin for agriculture, municipalities and rivers. In 2019, an effort funded by the Bureau of Reclamation and State of Oregon Water Resources Department, and developed in partnership with the collaborative, led to publication of a report on water supply, demand, and management options in the Deschutes Basin. The 2019 study—known as the [Upper Deschutes River Basin Study](#)—outlines broad management strategies to address water shortfalls for agriculture and instream needs across the basin; these include water conservation projects (e.g. piping projects, and on-farm infrastructure upgrades), market-based incentives (e.g. water leasing, transfers, and duty reduction), and enhanced or new storage (e.g. relocating existing storage farther downstream and restoring water storage capacity).

The 2019 report indicated that meeting all the water needs in the basin will require senior water right holders in irrigation districts to reduce demand and to share their water through innovative programs, including water transfers, leasing and more efficient water use on farm. Without a concerted effort to implement these programs, it will not be possible to enhance streamflows to meet the critical needs of fish and wildlife in the basin.

HB 3164 will support access to instream leasing programs by permanently authorizing split season leasing, ensuring this important tool is available to help move water to where it is needed most. In the Deschutes Basin, split season leasing is one of a suite of tools that can help us make meaningful progress towards to meeting the water needs of our rivers and streams.

LandWatch supports passage of HB 3164.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeremy Austin', written in a cursive style.

Jeremy Austin
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