



January 21, 2023

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

**Re: Deschutes River Conservancy Supports HB 2168**

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, and Committee Members:

The Deschutes River Conservancy (DRC) restores streamflow and improves water quality in the Deschutes Basin using a coordinated, collaborative, and voluntary approach. Founded in 1996 as a consensus-based, multi-stakeholder organization, the DRC's Board of Directors includes diverse representation from tribal, environmental, irrigated agriculture, and hydropower interests as well as federal, state and local government. Together with our partners we have restored over 350 cubic feet per second of flows to our basin's rivers while increasing the reliability of agricultural water rights and operations, and water supply for cities.

DRC supports HB 2168. The Deschutes Basin is experiencing groundwater declines, in large part due to reduced precipitation and extended years of drought. A significant number of landowners in rural areas have had to deepen wells, often facing economic barriers. The Water Well Abandonment, Repair and Replacement Fund is an important tool to help landowners adapt to these changes. The DRC also supports the investments in OSU-Extension landowner assistance and in the DEQ-led septic system low-interest loan programs. Stewarding clean and abundant groundwater into the future is a major priority in the Deschutes Basin and affects both surface water, groundwater, and human health.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Kate Fitzpatrick  
Executive Director  
Deschutes River Conservancy  
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