



## Eugene Water & Electric Board

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February 3, 2025

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

### **RE: Eugene Water & Electric Board Supports HB 2256**

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members of the Committee:

The Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) enthusiastically supports HB 2256. EWEB partners with McKenzie River Trust (MRT) to support their efforts to acquire land and hold the land in the public interest. EWEB's priority for supporting these acquisitions is to conserve and enhance source water protection for our municipal drinking water that supplies high quality, reliable drinking water to approximately 200,000 people in the Eugene metropolitan area. EWEB also supports the additional community benefits of land conservation including enhancement of fish and wildlife benefits, recreational open spaces, increased fire resiliency, and increased infrastructure protection.

EWEB has provided funding for MRT's acquisitions directly from rate payer funds as well as by obtaining grant funds and supporting MRT's grant funding applications. In some instances, concerns around legal lot determination have created additional expense and delays that can jeopardize acquired grant funding as those funds typically require timely acquisitions. The fear over potential liability by sellers can impede the ability for MRT to acquire conservation lands that would be beneficial to drinking water source water protection for EWEB and our community. Strategic conservation properties can become difficult to transact – once lot determination issues are identified, sellers can be reluctant to take on the potential liability or costly delays – this result in losing purchase opportunities or obstacles to apply for grant funding due to uncertain timelines around fixing the liability concerns.

EWEB supports HB 2256 as a solution to the problem of legal lot determination by waiving the liability of the seller for selling an unlawfully created unit of land if the buyer is both a 501(c)(3) and is clear in its intent to acquire the land to conserve its natural properties and functions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Jason Heuser  
Public Policy and Government Affairs Director  
Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB)