



Oregon

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Testimony for Senate Bill 511

Senate Committee Natural Resources and Wildfire

Senator Jeff Golden, Chair

Submitted by: Bryn Hudson, Legislative Coordinator

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide informational testimony on SB 511, which establishes a salmon credit pilot program to encourage the voluntary restoration of salmonid habitat in the Coquille and Coos watershed basins. This testimony is provided as informational only; the Department is not taking a position on this legislation.

Background

The Oregon Water Resources Department is the state's water quantity agency. The Department is charged with ensuring sufficient and sustainable water supplies are available to meet current and future needs. The Department's mission is to protect and manage water quantity responsibly so that Oregon can preserve this precious resource now and in the future by 1) restoring and protecting streamflow to ensure the sustainability of Oregon's ecosystem, economy, and quality of life, and 2) directly addressing Oregon's water supply needs.

Currently, Department staff have a limited scope in reviewing restoration projects. Typically, regional field staff review proposed restoration projects within their district and provide technical feedback on potential impacts to existing water rights and general compliance with Oregon's water laws. Staff will typically work with the applicant to discuss engineering plans, identify potential impacts to other points of diversion, and provide comment on potential injury to existing water rights, enlargement to any rights held by the applicant, and whether other water right transactions may be necessary to carry out the project.

What the Bill Does

This testimony is limited to section 3(3) of the bill, which pertains to the Department's role in reviewing designs for proposed projects under the salmon credit pilot program. The bill currently directs the Department to consult on project factors such as property damage and interference with existing properties. This is outside the Department's scope of expertise.

To better align the Department's role with the appropriate scope of work, the Department suggests an amendment that clarifies that the Oregon Water Resources Department role is limited to project compliance with ORS chapters 536-543.