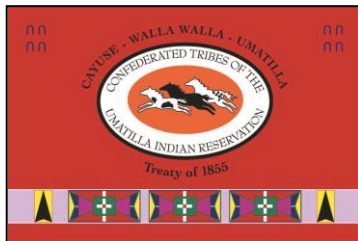


**Confederated Tribes *of the*
Umatilla Indian Reservation**

Department of Natural Resources



46411 Timine Way
Pendleton, OR 97801

antonchiono@ctuir.org (541) 429-7268

**Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Walla Walla 2050 Legislation
Senate Bill 761**

Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

February 6, 2025

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee, my name is Anton Chiono and I work on water policy for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

We greatly appreciate your time today and thank you for your consideration of our work in the Walla Walla. As you've heard from others this afternoon, the Walla Walla is a unique basin with its own set of unique challenges. However, I'd like to think we're also unique in our great commitment to one another, and our great commitment to working together to overcome these challenges. In today's testimony and written record, you will see representatives of the Tribes, water users, environmental groups, cities, and private landowners—diverse groups that have all recognized that the best path forward lies in working together.

Senate Bill 761 represents that spirit, and, as you've heard, builds upon what we've already achieved through this commitment to collaboration. At its core, SB 761 will help provide us the tools and funding to begin implementation of the Walla Walla 2050 Plan, our collaborative roadmap for sustainable water management.

This not insubstantial document was the product of many years of careful thought and analysis. Multiple strategies and projects were considered and evaluated by technical experts, diverse stakeholders from both Oregon and Washington, the Tribes, and state and federal agencies. The projects that best helped us achieve our desired future conditions for fish, farms, and people were then prioritized in the Plan.

Some of these strategies are management tools that the basin still needs to maximize the efficient use of its precious water resources. The -1 amendment represents one of these tools. While Oregon perhaps leads the nation in promoting streamflow restoration through laws that enable water rights to be left “instream” as a beneficial use, shortcomings remain in our statewide policies, particularly for irrigators who have perennial crops like the orchards and vineyards in the Walla Walla. As a result, despite finding ways to reduce their water use, irrigators in the Walla Walla have been unable to ensure that the water they leave instream can be protected to benefit stream flows and fish. We have been working closely with Oregon Water Resources Department on the -1 amendment and are excited to overcome this obstacle and provide water users in the Walla Walla the tools they need to help restore our rivers and fisheries.

Some of the strategies identified in the 2050 Plan are simply projects, which is what you’ll see in the -2 amendment. This funding request is for the \$2.5 million in “shovel ready” projects the 2050 group has identified in Oregon. These projects are among the 2050 Plan’s highest priorities, and, consistent Oregon’s Integrated Water Resources Strategy, all contribute to a “triple bottom line” of social, economic, and environmental benefit. They also seek to leverage our state’s precious financial resources by maximizing the amount of cost share they bring from other state, federal, Tribal, and private sources. And, thanks to Senator Hansell and Representative Levy’s legislation last year, the states can now work together to ensure that their own efforts are not duplicative. With this in mind, Washington’s Department of Ecology has taken on the task of administering funds under the 2050 Plan. This is why you’ll see the -2 amendment directing funding to Ecology for disbursement, even though these projects are in Oregon.

While we still have a great deal of work ahead of us, we are encouraged at how far we’ve come simply by a commitment to working together. For more than a century, the state line made tackling our water challenges in the Walla Walla impossible—but we have overcome this challenge through cooperation, and we will continue to work together to chart a new path forward. We thank you for your support in helping make this possible and greatly appreciate your consideration of SB 761.