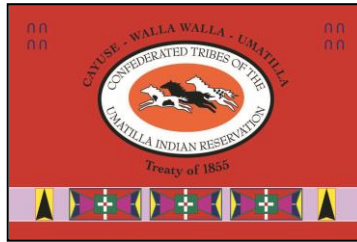


Confederated Tribes *of the*
Umatilla Indian Reservation

Board of Trustees



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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 Steven Hart and I am a member of the Board of Trustees of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

I am here today to ask you for your support for Senate Bill 761. This legislation will help us implement the Walla Walla Water 2050 Plan, which we created collaboratively with Oregon, Washington, and basin stakeholders to provide a roadmap for cooperative water management in the Walla Walla basin.

This legislation builds upon the strong foundation Senator Hansell and Representative Levy created last year with Senate Bill 1567, and we are greatly appreciative of Senator Nash and Representative Levy's continued leadership on this issue. After so many years of planning, we are pleased to now be turning to implementation in the Walla Walla.

In the Tribes' language, *Walla Walla* means "land of many waters." This refers to the abundant streams that once flowed through the Walla Walla Valley, where the Tribes gathered to fish for the salmon that once returned to the basin. These fisheries have been sacred to the culture and traditions of the Tribes since time immemorial and are central to exercising the rights reserved in the Treaty of 1855.

Salmon, and the water that supports them, are two of the Tribes' most important "First Foods"—but they are nearly gone from the Walla Walla today.

Today, the Tribes' homeland in the Walla Walla is divided between two states, Oregon and Washington. This political boundary has long prevented the management of the Walla Walla's water resources in a cooperative manner. It left us unable to solve the problems facing both instream flows and water users alike, despite our shared desire to do so.

Last year, Senator Hansell and Representative Levy helped us overcome this monumental obstacle by championing Senate Bill 1567. This bill mirrored companion legislation in Washington that directed the states to both work together on water management in the Walla Walla and share in the implementation of the 2050 Plan.

The State of Washington, in its desire to honor this commitment, has included \$2.5 million in its budget to begin implementing Walla Walla 2050 projects. The legislation we bring before you today would allow Oregon to also help share in implementation and would provide \$2.5 million to the highest priority projects in Oregon. Together, these investments would build upon the more than \$10 million already dedicated to the basin by the federal government and the Tribes, and reaffirm our commitment to the notion that we are strongest when we work together.

In the Walla Walla, we have identified a shared vision for a future where fish, farms, and people thrive together. With the 2050 Plan, we have the roadmap to help us get there. Now we must begin to follow that roadmap—but we cannot do so without your help. We thank you for your time and ask your support for Senate Bill 761.