



February 10, 2025

Representative Helm, Co-Chair
Representative Owens, Co-Chair
Committee Members
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Subject: Testimony in favor of House Bill 2169—a bill to direct the Department of Environmental Quality, in consultation with other state agencies and wastewater utilities, to update and implement policies, guidance, and programs that will support and encourage the development of beneficial reuse and land application projects in Oregon in a manner that protects public health and the environment

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

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA), the League of Oregon Cities (LOC), and the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO). Together, our organizations represent all of Oregon’s publicly owned wastewater treatment and stormwater management utilities that .

Wastewater utilities face increasingly stringent water quality permit limits. For some of these limits, like temperature, beneficial reuse of treated wastewater to support agricultural or industrial water needs, or to sustain greenspaces and habitats, can be a cost-effective strategy that maximizes benefits to the environment, farmers, industries, and communities, and that can conserve or reduce withdrawals of surface or groundwater sources.

Existing state policies direct state agencies to improve regulatory programs to support and promote water reuse, and to work together to overcome institutional, regulatory, and funding constraints. But competing demands on state agency resources have left the long overdue modernization of the state’s regulatory framework a goal that is aspirational but not achievable.

Some communities in Oregon have successfully developed recycled water projects. But many have struggled to develop projects or have given up on exploring them, because they’ve found the current permitting framework to be too difficult, complex, uncertain, and costly to navigate.

In 2023, the Legislature took a first step to mandate and fund DEQ to work with state agencies and municipal wastewater utilities to identify and recommend solutions to impediments that are deterring development of water reuse projects. HB 2169 will enable DEQ and state agency partners to continue this work. HB 2169 will require state agencies to work together as a team to solve problems, improve coordination, and create clear and consistent responses to the public. Finally, HB

2169 will compel tangible results in the form of policy and guidance improvements and ongoing implementation of a well-coordinated statewide program.

Oregon will continue to grapple with increasing pressures on water and the environment. Local communities can play a key role in achieving state goals for improved water quality, sustainable water supplies, and environmental and economic benefits by providing treated wastewater for beneficial purposes. HB 2169 will help the state capture these benefits.

Legislative action in 2023 got this process started and we have momentum in the right direction. But without continued funding through the passage of HB 2169, the state agencies will lack the resources needed to fulfill this effort and Oregon's communities will once again be unsupported in their efforts to develop this beneficial water resource use.

For your reference, additional background information on HB 2169 has been submitted to the record of this hearing.

We urge your support for this bill and we are available to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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