



February 10, 2025

The Honorable **Ken Helm**, the Honorable **Mark Owens**, Oregon Legislature **Water Caucus**

Dear Representatives Helm and Owens,

OAWU's unwavering support has made me feel like I was taking advantage of their services. However, I've come to realize that expressing my gratitude is a way to give back. While a simple thank you may suffice, I want to share just how important and beneficial their field staff have been in assisting me and various board members to serve seven small water systems.

I first encountered OAWU and many of its staff members during my initial week working under a water operator 14 years ago. Since then, I've found no better environment for learning about water systems and staying updated with current regulations than at an OAWU conference or with an OAWU circuit rider.

Over the past year as a new certified water operator, my confidence in operations has been shaped by OAWU's direct influence and indirectly through guidance of Nonda Zwald, the previous operator who received continuous support and training from OAWU. I will keep recommending the classes offered by OAWU and hope to follow example and someday pass on the knowledge I gain.

In January, Heath Cokeley assisted me with troubleshooting and completing the setup of an air-locked chlorinator pump for Kilchis Water District. Heath checked in two weeks later, and it was still functioning. His guidance helped me months later when dealing with another pump installation.

In July, Heath recommended taking a water sample after first verifying a consistent chlorine residual in the water system, a tip that was welcomed during my first boil water notice for Pleasant Valley Water Company.

In November, Heath Cokeley assisted me in troubleshooting a sudden loss of pressure on Burbank Rd in the Long Prairie Water District. Although customers had not reported this issue for years, tests indicated that it persisted and appeared to be restricted in some way. Heath offered viable solutions, and Jason Brooks followed up with additional testing, giving me the confidence to approve a new connection along with improvements.



In December, Heath and Scott Berry made three visits to find a leak that had evaded detection. The water system had just dealt with three other leaks back-to-back and had previously paid for leak detection, making their assistance during this recovery period greatly appreciated.

I am contacting you now to respectfully request your continued support for rural water, the Oregon Association of Water Utilities and the National Rural Water Association. Continued funding would allow OAWU to maintain its on-site technical assistance and training classes. The federal dollars that are appropriated to National Rural Water Association (NRWA) are distributed to the states permitting the NRWA state affiliates to provide vital, hands-on technical assistance to small and rural water systems. Without these programs, small communities would lose a valuable resource, which assists them in maintaining safe drinking water and complying with wastewater standards set to protect the environment. This valuable service saves hundreds of thousands of dollars every year for small rural systems since the technical staff is available free of charge to these communities. Increased regulations and costs are already hitting the small systems very hard. OAWU's technical assistance offered throughout the state is an essential resource to these communities struggling to provide safe drinking water and protect the environment they serve.

Thank you for your assistance to rural and small communities in the effort to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, and improving the environment in our water supplies.

Sincerely,
Clyde Wagner
Wagner Waterworks

Pleasant Valley Water Company
Long Prairie Water District
Kilchis Water District
Latimer Road Water Association
Juno Nonprofit Water Improvement District
Northwood Water District
West Hills Water Company