



To: Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
From: Joe Moll, Executive Director
Date: February 25, 2025
RE: H.B. 5039 and H.B. 5040, Support for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) 2025-2027 Budget

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Board and staff of McKenzie River Trust, I offer a few thoughts in support of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's (OWEB) 2025-2027 budget. In addition to our support for OWEB's programs generally, there are two programmatic areas and several Policy Option Packages that we support moving forward in this legislative session:

- Enhanced funding for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, **H.B. 3131**
- Continued funding for the Drinking Water Source Protection Grant Program, **H.B. 3341**
- Supporting staffing and program continuity through Policy Option Packages
 - POPs 090, 100, 102, 105, 106, 107, 108

McKenzie River Trust has worked collaboratively with OWEB staff on dozens of projects since its inception in 1999. Over time the intersection of OWEB's land acquisition programs and its habitat restoration programs has driven more efficient, effective and lasting whole watershed approaches to habitat and community enhancement. Broad support for Measure 76 from counties throughout the state was one sign of that effectiveness. OWEB's growing portfolio of grant programs, including for agricultural land conservation and drinking water protection, is another reflection of public interest in direct investments in land and water conservation.

Given the scale of program growth that the agency has experienced, the proposed investments in staffing, especially, are modest by comparison. Oregon currently faces significant, sometimes wicked problems in land use and water security. Agencies like OWEB attract and retain people who are personally committed to land, water, and community. Such personal commitments among state employees provide a significant multiplier effect for addressing those challenges in cost-effective and lasting ways.

We will continue to work closely with OWEB staff as a partner in creative projects that secure Oregon's lands, waters, fish, and wildlife for the future Oregonians that will follow us. I trust they will look back with thanks for your work on this legislation, and all that you are doing on their behalf.

Best wishes,

Joe Moll
Executive Director

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