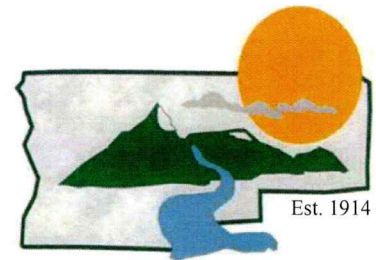


JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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March 11, 2025

Testimony in Support of House Bill 3806 | Deschutes River Water Bank Pilot Program

Co Chairs Helm & Owens, Vice Chair McDonald;

Thank You for the opportunity to support House Bill 3806, which would authorize the Water Resources Commission to approve a Deschutes River water bank pilot program.

The Deschutes River is the lifeblood of Central Oregon, supporting agriculture, recreation, and communities while also serving as a critical habitat for fish and wildlife. However, ongoing drought, climate change, and historical overallocation of water have created significant challenges in meeting the diverse water needs of the region.

HB 3806 provides a forward-thinking, market-based solution to improve water management through a voluntary water bank. This pilot program would:

- **Increase Water Supply Reliability** – By allowing the movement of water between irrigation districts, cities, and conservation efforts, the program ensures more efficient use of existing water rights.
- **Support Economic Stability** – Agriculture is a cornerstone of Central Oregon's economy. The water bank will help irrigation districts, especially those with junior water rights, maintain access to water during critical growing seasons.
- **Enhance Environmental Protection** – By dedicating a portion of banked water to in-stream flows, the program will contribute to restoring fish and wildlife habitat in the Deschutes River, benefiting native species and the broader ecosystem.
- **Provide Local Control & Collaboration** – The bill ensures that the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, irrigation districts, cities, counties, and conservation groups work together to shape and manage the program, promoting a balanced and equitable approach to water use. The Tribes have a key role in this pilot program as they have a long-established interest in water throughout the Deschutes Basin.

This legislation is a responsible step toward sustainable water management, ensuring that Central Oregon's communities, businesses, and ecosystems have the water resources they need for the future. I urge you to pass HB 3806 and support this innovative, collaborative effort to protect and enhance our water resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelly Simmelink". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kelly" being more prominent.

Kelly Simmelink