



League of Oregon Cities
Special Districts Association of Oregon

March 12, 2025

House Committee On Agriculture
Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

Co-Chairs Helm & Owens, Vice Chair McDonald, and Committee Members:

The League of Oregon Cities is a member organization representing all 241 cities in the state, and the Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) represents approximately 950 districts across the state. **We support the overarching intent of House Bill 3544 to improve the contested case process within the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD).** The backlog of 227 pending contested cases creates significant delays, impeding progress on critical water-related projects and increasing costs for municipalities, applicants, and stakeholders. A more predictable and efficient process will benefit cities, districts, and their residents by expediting decision-making on water rights and related permits.

We appreciate the bill's focus on establishing a structured timeline for contested cases, including the proposed 180-day default schedule from case referral to hearing. This timeline will improve efficiency while maintaining due process protections. Additionally, the bill's provisions to encourage settlements and clarify final order procedures are steps in the right direction.

Overall, LOC and SDAO support HB 3544's effort to streamline the contested case process and address the backlog, provided that any extensions remain reasonable and do not create new barriers to timely decision-making. We appreciate the Committee's work on this issue and look forward to continued collaboration to ensure a fair and effective process for Oregon's cities and special districts.

Many thanks,
Michael Martin – League of Oregon Cities
Mark Landauer – Special Districts Association of Oregon