



Date:	March 20, 2025
To:	Representative Ken Helm, Co-Chair Representative Mark Owens, Co-Chair Members of the House Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water Committee
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager Branden Pursinger
Subject:	House Bill 3116 – Place Based Planning for Water

The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) is a non-partisan member organization that advocates on issues that unite all county governing bodies and have an impact on county functions, governance, budgets, and services.

The Association of Oregon Counties has been in support of the **Place-Based Planning** process from the beginning. The opportunity this process has for not only state-local partnerships, but also the benefits that are provided for entire watersheds, regions, and Oregon as a whole, cannot be overstated.

In 2015, OWRD received legislative authority and funding to begin a water planning pilot-phase. In 2016, four locations were identified and began testing the draft planning guidelines. Those four locations were the Upper Grande Ronde Sub-Basin, Lower John Day Sub-Basin, Mid-Coast Region, and the Harney Basin. Each of the four locations approached the Place-Based planning differently - allow for local communities, basins, and regions, to assess their water needs and identify ways they could address the water issues in their own way.

HB 3116-2 allocates funding for the Place Based Planning Process at Oregon's Water Resources Department, not just the four current locations but makes funding available for other areas of the state to begin this process. The -2 amendment also requires new reporting on Place Based Planning to the legislature as well as water planning and management work groups.

Counties play an integral role in water conversations. When a county has drought on the horizon, we are the ones that request a drought declaration from the state. When a county wants to address housing and expansion, without the resources needed, i.e. water, those areas cannot adequately be developed. In addition to those, counties have a desire for conservation efforts. Counties will work to ensure the areas identified for conservation are conducted in collaboration with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and other state agencies and Tribes.

A county can serve as either a convener like the case of Union County in the Upper Grande Ronde Basin Pilot, or as an interested party at the table once convened. Counties should be involved in the long-term process to ensure there is water for current and future generations.

In 2022, 17 of the 36 counties received the Governor's drought declaration; and in 2021, 26 of the 36 counties received such declarations. With rising temperatures and changing climate, it is anticipated that water scarcity will continue. Without a locally driven process on place based water planning, Oregon will not be able to address the water scarcity issues now or in the future.

The Association of Oregon Counties has a priority this session for the continuation of funding for Place Based Planning and we are in strong support of HB 3116 and the recommended -2 amendment.