



## Food & Wildlife for the Future

April 1, 2025

To: Representative Ken Helm and Representative Mark Owens, Co-Chairs and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Re: House Bill 2803

Water for Life, Inc would like to record its strong opposition to House Bill 2803 addressing, once again, the issue of fee levels maintained by the Oregon Water Resources Department.

To begin with, considering the economic conditions our state's agricultural community has experienced in recent years, this is, without question, the wrong time to so significantly increase fees.

For reference, attached is a one-page review of the magnitude the proposed fee increases would represent for just one of the various transaction fees the department desires to assess. As you will ascertain, a "base fee" with the levels of increases proposed through HB 2803 will have increased by over 400 percent since 2009.

You may also note, the Department's fees have been increased every four years since the first substantial increase in 2009. It is interesting to note, when fees were originally increased in 2009, the enabling legislation contained a specific "sunset" provision. Rather than considering this sunset date, as identified in the attachment, fees have routinely been implemented every four years subsequent to 2009.

Finally, it has been frequently mentioned the "ag community" previously "agreed" on a 50 – 50 split between fee revenue and General Fund dollars to fund the transactions required of the Department. I would like to bring specific attention to this assertion; specifically, I believe it very important to note this agreement was far from "unanimous" with respect to the ag community's agreement on the 50 – 50 split.

We strongly encourage the Committee to reject the proposed fee increases and not advance HB 2803.

Glenn Barrett

/s/

Water for Life, President

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**OWRD “Fee-Supported Programs” – Budget-related Proposal (2025-2027)**

|  |                             |              |     |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|-----|
| CPI Growth (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics)             |                             |              |     |
| **   | January 2009 – January 2025 | Approx. est. | 50% |
| Inflation Estimate (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis) |                             |              |     |
| **   | 2009 – 2024                 | Approx est.  | 47% |

OWRD “Transaction Fee” Proposal (2025 – 2027)

\*\*Using solely the “base” fee for an appropriation of water (ORS 536.050)

|  | Base Fee                 | Increase | % Change |
|--|--------------------------|----------|----------|
| 2009 Base Fee<br>(SB 788, OR – 2009)                 | \$500.                   | \$700.   | +40.00%  |
| 2013 Base Fee<br>(HB 2259, OR-2013)                  | \$700.                   | \$800.   | +14.28%  |
| 2017 Base Fee<br>(HB 2295, OR-2017)                  | \$800.                   | \$930.   | +16.25%  |
| 2021 Base Fee<br>(HB 2142, OR-2023)                  | \$930.                   | \$1,090. | +17.20%  |
| % Increase 2009 – 2021<br>Vs. CPI @ an estimated 49% | (\$500. – to - \$1,090.) |          | +118.00% |

OWRD Proposed Fee Increases (2025 – 2027) (Two initial proposals identified)

|                               |            |            |                 |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| @                             | 76% (2025) |            | \$1,918.40      |
|                               | 22% (2026) |            | \$2,340.45      |
| % increase subsequent to 2009 |            |            | +368.09%        |
| @                             | 135%       | \$2,561.50 |                 |
| % increase subsequent to 2009 |            |            | <b>+412.30%</b> |