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**503-622-5000**



# ***Rhododendron Water Association***

***Providing tomorrow's water quality and reliability... Today***

To: Joint Ways and Means Committee  
Re: Support of HB 5006 (HB 3121 & HB 3341)  
Date: April 18, 2025  
From: Steven Graeper, President Rhododendron Water Association

I am writing in SUPPORT of HB 5006, which has provisions to fund both HB 3121 and HB 3341.

Rhododendron Water Association is small water system on the flanks of Mt. Hood. In 2021 it became necessary to secure protections for our watershed from the ravages of clear-cutting. At the time, we paid \$175,000 for an Equitable Servitude. With an annual budget of only \$163,000, that expense severely impacted our ability to operate an effective water system. However, with some state assistance and tight budget management, we were able to survive, but not without some financial and system wide hardship.

In 2023, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislative Assembly passed HB 2010, which had provisions to fund Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) \$5,000,000 for the purpose of allowing them to establish a Grant program to assist Oregon water systems protect their source water. The Rhododendron Water Association is a recipient of a portion of those Grant funds. With the assistance from those Grant funds, Rhododendron's water system can now continue to provide an uninterrupted supply of safe and clean drinking water to our customers.

Ours is not a unique situation. There are over 3300 water systems in the state of Oregon, most of which need to protect their sources of water. HB 2010's funds, distributed during the 2023-2025 biennium, were only able to assist a small number of water systems protect their watersheds. The provisions in HB 5006 allows for the continued biennium funding of the OWEB Source Water Protection Grant funding program, as outlined in HB 3341.

I urge the Ways and Means Committee to fully fund HB 5006.

I am also writing in support HB 3121, which has provisions to distribute \$2,500,000 to Oregon Association of Water Utilities (OAWU). If funded by HB 5006, HB 3121 will allow OAWU to provide technical assistance and education to small and very small community water systems, which is extremely necessary to address their needs and vulnerabilities. As a small water system, Rhododendron Water Association has benefitted substantially from the assistance provided by OAWU, but that assistance has been limited due to lack of funding. By funding HB 3121, OAWU will be able to substantially improve the assistance and education they provide to the underfunded small and very small water systems.

I again urge the Ways and Means Committee to fully fund HB 5006.

Thank you for your consideration!

Respectfully,

Steven Graeper, President

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