



ATNI
Changing Currents Tribal Water Program
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April 18, 2025

To: Joint Committee on Ways & Means

Subject: Support for \$4 Million in Water Equity Funding

Co-Chairs Senator Kate Lieber and Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Vice Chair Senator Fred Girod, Representatives David Gomberg and Greg Smith, and members of the committee:

My name is Chrissa Wilkie, and I am writing on behalf of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Changing Currents Tribal Water Program. The Changing Currents program focuses on fostering deeper, collective dialogue about water protection and its importance to Tribal communities. We support HB 3528 as it is a critical step in addressing Oregon's water challenges for all Oregonians. This House Bill aligns with Oregon's commitment to water justice by providing direct funding for Tribal and community-based organizations to support water education, emergency preparedness, and policy advocacy through the Water Equity Fund.

As a past recipient of this funding, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians' Changing Currents Tribal Water Program was able to deliver meaningful programming to Tribal youth throughout the region. Participants came from a variety of Tribal communities, each facing unique water challenges—including aging infrastructure, water contamination, and overall shortages. Through the program, these youth had the opportunity to explore ways to engage with water issues and learn how to become advocates for their own communities.

Water connects us all and is the lifeblood of our communities, economies, and ecosystems. House Bill 3528 recognizes the interconnectedness of water by creating a fund that directly benefits all Oregon communities. This continued funding creates an opportunity to empower tribes and environmental justice communities to address their water challenges effectively. The Water Equity Fund is Oregon's opportunity to invest in communities and increase their capacity to tackle complex water challenges.

As Oregon's water systems face increasing pressure due to aging infrastructure, climate change, and long-standing underinvestment, this funding is needed now more than ever. These challenges disproportionately impact communities—Tribal nations, rural areas, low-income families, and communities of color—who often lack the resources to address water crisis effectively. By passing House Bill 3528, the Legislature will help ensure that all Oregonians, especially those most impacted, have access to clean and reliable water. This is an investment in health, safety, and resilience for our communities today and for future generations. I urge you to support House Bill 3528 and continue investing in water equity for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Chrissa Wilkie, Tribal Water Education Fellow
Changing Currents: Tribal Water Policy and Education Program
Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians