On behalf of Threemile Canyon Farms, we write in strong support of Oregon LC 244 (HB 4006). As leaders in sustainable farming practices in the region for nearly three decades and proud members of the agricultural community, we have seen the positive impact – both environmentally and economically – that responsible, forward-thinking water policy can have.

Threemile Canyon Farms operates in one of the most productive agricultural regions in Oregon and the nation. Collectively, Umatilla and Morrow County consistently rank as the number one food-producing region in the state, generating over $2 billion annually in crop value. The region is responsible for approximately 50% of the nation's potato supply. Since 2015, more than $300 million has been invested locally in water, energy, and agricultural infrastructure. Protecting the long-term sustainability of this region is essential not only for local communities, but for Oregon's food system and economy as a whole.

LC 244 applies to a narrowly defined 51-mile stretch of the Columbia River—roughly 4 percent of its total length—and does three specific things:

1. It allows an intergovernmental entity formed under ORS Chapter 190 to manage and optimize Columbia River water after it has been diverted, similar to the authority granted to irrigation districts.

2. It allows that entity to move the same authorized diversion rate between points of diversion within its boundary, without changing the season of use or maximum daily pumping rate.

3. It allows participation in a district mapping process to modernize outdated place-of-use boundaries into a realistic management boundary suited for current conditions.

Importantly, this bill does not create new water rights or modify existing rights, does not increase diversions, does not eliminate state oversight or enforcement, does not weaken protections of the Columbia River, and does not infringe on the Umatilla River tribal settlement negotiations. The State of Oregon retains full authority and can view what is being diverted and used at any time through accurate measurement, reporting, and compliance requirements. Everything remains exactly the same with respect to authorized rates, volumes, and oversight. What the bill provides is a modern, transparent, and accountable framework for managing existing water more efficiently once it has already been lawfully diverted.

From our perspective, LC 244 strengthens water law by focusing state regulatory oversight on what matters most—maximum diversion rates, total duty, compliance, and enforcement—while reducing unnecessary administrative complexity associated with day-to-day operational changes that do not affect overall water use. This allows the Oregon

Water Resources Department to redirect staff time toward reducing backlogs and addressing challenges in other basins across the state.

The bill also creates an important pathway for senior water rights holders to voluntarily commit their supplies to a district for the benefit of the broader region. In a landscape where new water supplies are extremely limited, this kind of voluntary, collaborative approach is essential. LC 244 enables flexibility while maintaining accountability, supporting aquifer recovery, improving drought resilience, and ensuring accurate measurement and transparent reporting.

We also strongly support the bill's annual reporting requirements, which will allow the Legislature, state agencies, and other regions to learn from this narrowly scoped pilot effort. Eastern Oregon has a long history of collaboration, and information sharing is one of the most effective tools we have to advance water sustainability without unintended consequences.

Ultimately, LC 244 modernizes water management without increasing water use, strengthens transparency and accountability, supports economic stability in a critical agricultural region, and protects the integrity of Oregon's water law framework.

For these reasons, Threemile Canyon Farms respectfully urges your full support and passage of LC 244.

Sincerely,
Threemile Canyon Farms