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EMERGENCY BUSINESS

DATE: May 18, 2011

TO: Co-Chairs, Committee on Ways and Means, Natural Resources Subcommittee

RE: HB 3165-A, relating to water right transfers for water stored in Willamette Basin federal storage projects.

Senator Edwards:
Representative Cowan:
Representative Jenson:

The Lane County Board of Commissioners has reviewed HB 3165-A and is in support of this measure. We ask that you schedule a work session for this bill and make a "DO PASS" recommendation. This bill has significant implications for Lane County and its cities. In that it establishes a clear public process is consistent with our principles.

Of the 13 federally managed reservoirs this measure identifies, 9 are located in Lane County. Of these, five are direct sources of drinking water for cities in Lane County. This measure will give these cities a voice at the table when decisions regarding the future uses of stored water are to be made.

We want to emphasize our insistence for establishment of a stakeholder process. It has been our experience with regards to forests resources managed by the federal government that too often decisions are made without local input. This is a sure recipe for protracted litigation and future distrust.

An exception to this rule is our experience with so-called "Title II" projects under Secure Rural Schools Act funding. In this example, local resource advisory committees (RAC's) work with individual federal forest managers to select restoration and other management projects for funding. In this example, there is not one single instance of a project ending in litigation.

What is true for federally managed forest resources should also hold true to federally managed water rights issues; involvement of local stakeholders is simply good practice.

HB 3165-A memorializes the need for stakeholder involvement, and we urge you to act on this bill.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY ALEX CUYLER ON BEHALF OF THE LANE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS