



To: House Committee on Energy and the Environment  
Rep. Ken Helm, Chair  
Rep. Mark Johnson, Vice Chair  
Rep. Karin Power, Vice Chair

From: Bob Van Dyk, Wild Salmon Center

Date: March 22, 2017

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 2705, 2706, 2707**

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bills 2705, 2706, and 2707.

The Wild Salmon Center is an Oregon-based conservation organization that promotes the conservation and sustainable use of wild salmon ecosystems across the Pacific Rim.

We support the concepts behind all three of these bills as important steps to ensure prudent use of Oregon's water resources.

Measurement, as required by HB 2705, is a cornerstone of managing any resource, and is essential to providing fair and science-based decisions.

Funding, as provided by HB 2706 and HB 2707, is critical to ensuring that measurement is accurate and water allocations are sustainable for the full range of beneficial uses.

Together these bills mark an important step toward sustainable water use.

The Wild Salmon Center's interest in this issue, of course, is that cold and adequate water are essential to salmon. But sound water management is obviously not just about salmon. We are all dependent on sustainable ecosystems. Agricultural, industrial, and residential users all benefit over the long run from sustainable and conservation-minded management.

We see some urgency to efforts to improve measurement and funding of water management for two reasons.

First, as our population and economy grow we will need more water. According to the 2015 OWRD forecast, by 2050 demand will be 15% higher than it is today.<sup>1</sup>

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[https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/LAW/docs/IWRS/OWRD\\_2015\\_Statewide\\_LongTerm\\_Water\\_Demand\\_Forecast.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/LAW/docs/IWRS/OWRD_2015_Statewide_LongTerm_Water_Demand_Forecast.pdf)

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Second, scientific projections on the effects of climate change show that many of the changes in Oregon will increase the pressure to manage our water wisely. The Third Oregon Climate Assessment Report, issued in January, makes this clear. The Water Resources section starts with this sentence: “Warming temperatures, changes in precipitation, and decreasing snowpack are already having, and will continue to have, significant impacts on hydrology and water resources in Oregon.”<sup>2</sup>

The report details how more precipitation will fall as rain, reducing snowpack, increasing winter flood risk, and changing summer extreme low flows.

The consequences of these changes should be sobering for all of us. As the report notes (p. 17), these changes in supply and demand “are expected to strain the ability...to meet the many and varied water needs of Oregonians, namely irrigation, municipal drinking water, industrial activities, hydropower, flood control, fisheries, wildlife, and recreation.”

For salmon, there will be new potential threats from increased peak flows (which can scour habitat), changes in flow timing, reduced summer flows, and increased stream temperatures. These shifts could change run timing and alter life history.

Salmon will have to adapt to some of these changes that we cannot control, but prudent management of our water resources will help us make better and more informed decisions, so as to mitigate and address these changes. And there is no replacement for measurement of available water and water use to make prudent decisions.

Failure to manage our water wisely in the face of climate change can have dire consequences for salmon and the economy. Consider the current situation on the Klamath. The current projections for salmon returns to the Klamath are the lowest ever predicted, and they could lead to dramatic reductions in commercial fishing out of Oregon’s coastal harbors. While the Klamath salmon runs are affected by many factors, water management is clearly an important one.

Though Oregon’s water challenges are daunting, we are confident that we can overcome them by working together. Oregon needs enough water to support a vibrant agricultural sector, water to support growth of our industrial and residential sectors, and water to recover and sustain our fish and wildlife. These three bills represent an important step in attaining these multiple goals.

In closing, I would like to emphasize that we understand there may be more to be done to improve these bills to broaden support. We know it is important that broad policy directives also are sufficiently adaptable to address individual circumstances in implementation, and to connect ends and means as closely as practicable. But we also must emphasize that these problems are not going to get easier, so we ask your support for these bills today.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.occri.net/media/1055/ocar3\\_final\\_all\\_01-30-2017\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.occri.net/media/1055/ocar3_final_all_01-30-2017_compressed.pdf)