



March 7, 2019

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Re: Trout Unlimited and Hydropower Reform Coalition Comments on SB 508

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill (SB) 508. My name is Chandra Ferrari and I represent Trout Unlimited, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fishes, such as trout and salmon, and their habitats. Trout Unlimited has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide including over 3,000 in Oregon. As a member, Trout Unlimited is also providing comments on behalf of Hydropower Reform Coalition (HRC), a diverse coalition of more than 160 national, regional and local organizations with a combined membership of more than one million people. HRC members jointly have an interest in protecting and restoring rivers that are impacted by hydropower dams.

TU and HRC strongly oppose SB 508 because it would undermine the intent of the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) program to develop new renewable energy sources. SB 508 proposes RPS-eligibility for any size hydropower facility whether or not it has been certified as “low-impact”, which would automatically make thousands of megawatts of *existing* hydropower RPS-eligible. This reduces the need to develop new renewables and undermines the RPS program.

In a broader perspective, the footprint of a hydropower project can be large with commensurate ecological harm. The existing RPS program recognizes this by excluding most hydropower from RPS eligibility unless it has been certified as “low-impact” by a national certification organization. Low-impact certifications, such as those obtained by the Low Impact Hydropower Institute (LIHI), are issued to hydropower projects upon findings that projects are operated in a manner that meets science-based environmental, recreational and cultural criteria. The goal of SB 508, to include any manner of hydro in the RPS with or without environmental safeguards, would come just as power companies are determining that many hydropower projects are unsustainable and that even their grid regulating function may be subject to competition from more efficient technologies with a much smaller ecological footprint, such as batteries.

TU and HRC urge this Committee to not take a step backwards in regard to climate and energy policy. Oregon recently took a strong step in addressing climate change by requiring the state’s largest utilities to deliver 50% renewable energy by 2040. The intent of SB 508 is to make it easier to achieve the 50 percent requirement, which would weaken both the RPS program and the proposed Climate Action Program (HB 2020) in its aim to rapidly decrease greenhouse gas emissions. In so doing, it would also disincentivize hydropower operators from operating their

projects with sufficient environmental safeguards to ensure the riverine reaches affected by these projects remain suitable for fish and wildlife and other human uses.

For these reasons, we are opposed to SB 508.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chandra Ferrari".

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