



## Clackamas River Basin Council

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May 16, 2024

Laura Hartt  
Rulemaking Coordinator  
Oregon Water Resources Department  
[WRD\\_DL\\_rule-coordinator@water.oregon.gov](mailto:WRD_DL_rule-coordinator@water.oregon.gov)

Dear Laura Hartt,

The Clackamas River Basin Council (CRBC) supports the Oregon Water Resources Department efforts to update rules for new groundwater right applications. The CRBC was authorized by the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners in 1996 as an implementer for the Oregon Recovery Plan for Salmon and Steelhead, specifically with a responsibility to improve state waterways.

The CRBC's specific mission is: *"To foster partnerships for clean water, to improve fish and wildlife habitat, and to enhance the quality of life for those who live, work, and recreate in the Clackamas River Basin."*

The Council collaborates with numerous partners to improve the quality of the Clackamas River, and provide a unique showcase of habitat restoration in a rural-to-urban setting. Our voluntary partnerships exceed \$10 million in grants over more than two decades. Together, we support extensive restoration and in-stream habitat projects for watershed health.

The proposed rules concerning groundwater rights will help to ensure the streams that sustain the fish, wildlife, and people of the Clackamas River continue to flow for current and future generations. Ground water is critical for maintaining summer base flows, and can be a significant source of the cool, clean water that our iconic salmon and steelhead rely on to live. Over-pumping of groundwater creates low flow conditions thereby limiting fish access to side channels and off-channel rearing areas, and creates potential fish passage barriers. Failing to address the overutilization of ground water undermines the Council's continual efforts to recover State and Federally-listed salmonids in the Clackamas basin, and must be avoided if recovery efforts for these culturally and economically significant species is to be successful.

CRBC is aware that several existing groundwater rights and exempt groundwater uses in the Clackamas River Basin will not be impacted by WRD's new rules. CRBC is not aware that said existing groundwater usage is adversely impacting the tributaries nor the mainstem of the Clackamas River. However, we ask that you place existing and exempt water use on the Department's list for future considerations of ground water use and management.

Please also consider the status of water right holders that are requesting time extensions to perfect their rights and for unperfected water rights that have not yet requested time extensions. If water use measurement and reporting is not already part of the unperfected water use permits, please consider incorporating them in your review of the existing, and yet to be received, time extension requests as a

matter of public interest review. The Council appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the proposed rules.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Bugni". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" and last name "Bugni" clearly distinguishable.

Executive Director

David Bugni  
Chair