Dear Members of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to share written comments regarding Agenda Item G, the 2021-2023 Spending Plan and H -- 2021-2023 Council Capacity Grant Guidance Updates.

On behalf of Oregon’s watershed councils, I want to thank you for recognizing the range and extent to which COVID-19 and the 2020 wildfire season has affected Councils -- it is true that almost every aspect of conservation and restoration work has been affected by social distancing requirements, reduced access to fieldwork sites and outreach venues, slow-downs in permitting and other processes, etc. and the challenges have imposed real impacts on our projects. For these reasons, we appreciate OWEB streamlining the application process for 2021-2023 capacity grants for currently funded councils. It is a thoughtful gesture and will enhance Councils’ ability to plan ahead for the next biennium.

We also appreciate the plan to maintain capacity spending for Watershed Councils for the 2021-2023 biennium. We encourage OWEB to consider including cost-of-living increases in their calculation, as supporting Watershed employees contributions and expertise directly relates to our ability to maintain employee retention across our organizations.

Thank you, and warm regards,

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