



Oregon's Water Caucus

Charting a Secure,
Sustainable, Resilient
Path Forward for All

Harmony Burright
Legislative Water Caucus



Water in Oregon

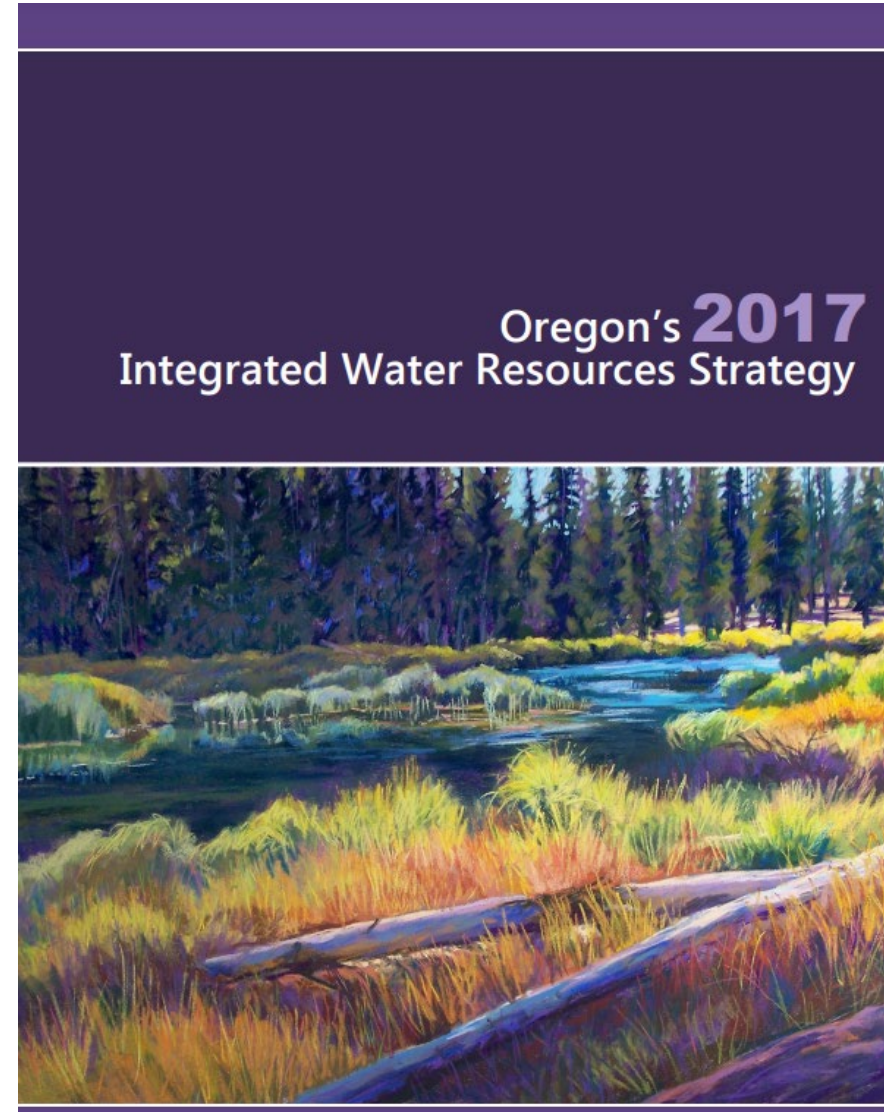
- By law, “all water within the state from all sources of water supply belongs to the public”
- Water is vital to Oregon’s communities, environment, and economy
- The past 100+ years of water management focused on issuing and regulating permits to use water
- Water management is fragmented and uncoordinated



Guiding Framework

“Water is a finite resource with growing demands; water scarcity is a reality in Oregon. Water-related decisions should rest on a thorough analysis of supply, the demand / need for water, the potential for increasing efficiencies and conservation, and alternative ways to meet these demands.”

– 2017 Integrated Water Resources Strategy Policy Advisory Group



Sustained Bi-Partisan Water Leadership

- Water has historically been underfunded
- Nearly 10 years of investments to implement the Integrated Water Resources Strategy
- 2021 marked the largest investment to-date, but it is just a down payment on what is needed
- 2023 built on past success and maintained momentum on water



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PRESS RELEASE

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Legislature Passes Landmark Water Package

Oregon will invest over \$530 million in water infrastructure, planning, community support, and more

Water Bill Passes Through Key Legislative Committee

Northeast Oregon Now - Tuesday, July 2, 2013

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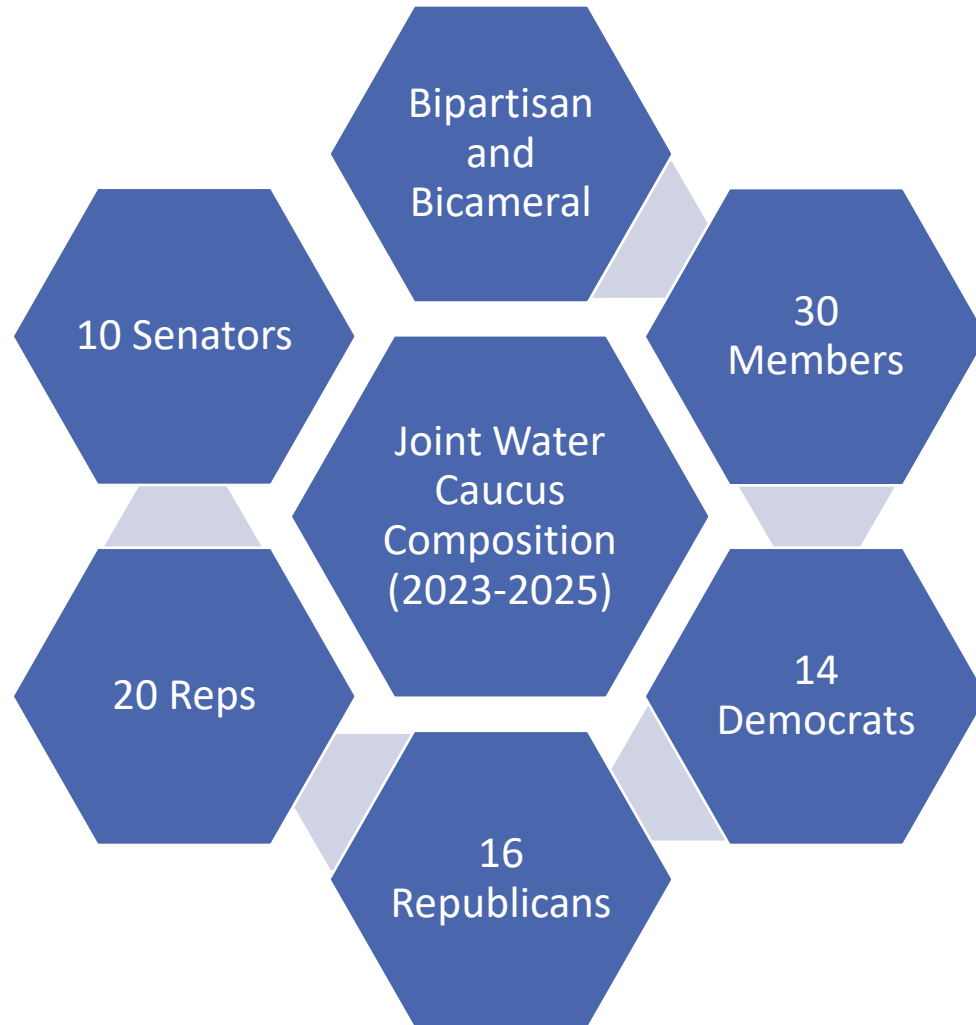


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An Oregon water bill aimed at developing water infrastructure in the Umatilla Basin has made its way through the Joint Ways and Means Budget Committee.

Senate Bill 839 establishes a Water Supply Development account to make loans and grants available for water conservation, reuse and storage projects. The bill would also establish two task forces to review and make recommendations on the structure of the loan and grants, the needs of watersheds for seasonally varying flows and financial feasibility of new water storage projects.

Water Caucus Membership



- 4 Co-chairs (2 Democrats, 2 Republicans, 2 Senators, 2 Representatives)
- Membership changes every biennia
- New membership drive in 2025

Water Caucus Focus

- Sustained bipartisan leadership
- Learn from and engage diverse perspectives
- Elevate the importance of water
- Don't shy away from challenging conversations
- Encourage bipartisan dialogue and problem solving



Highlights

- Formed during 2023
- BiDRAWs Package (\$173 million for water in 2023)
- 6 tours + 10 learning opportunities
- Water investment tracker (2013-2023)
- Water investment needs survey (2024)
- Water bill tracker (2025)
- Water Day at the Capitol (200 participants)



2023/2024 BiDRAWS Highlights

- Funding to update OWRD Water Availability Reporting System and continue work on an Integrated Water Data Portal
- Restored \$1.5 million in water equity funding
- Funding to assess and address vulnerabilities of small and very small community water systems
- Creation of a Drinking Source Water Protection and Aquifer Testing Funds
- Permanent fund for Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning
- Instream leasing improvements
- Agricultural Water Management Technical Assistance Program at OSU
- Funding for Irrigation Modernization and other projects

Water Caucus Priorities

URGENT Priorities

- Drinking Water Security
- Drinking Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Infrastructure Funding

RESPONSIVE Priorities

- Housing-Water Nexus
- Transportation-Water Nexus
- Fire-Water Nexus



2025 Bills We Were Watching + What Passed

- Drinking water security and water infrastructure
 - HB 3121 – Addressing Vulnerabilities of Small Community Water Systems
 - HB 2168 – Financial and Technical Assistance for Wells and Septic
 - HB 3634 – Water Workforce Development
 - **HB 3031** – Housing Infrastructure Production Fund
 - Special Public Works Fund
 - Source water protection (**SB 1154**, HB 3341, **HB 2947**, **SB 91**)
 - Living with beaver (HB 3143, **HB 3932**)
 - Drinking water quality testing (**HB 3525**, HB 3526)
 - Low-income rate payer assistance (HB 3527)

Water Caucus Priorities

IMPORTANT Priorities

- Water Data and Informed Water Decision-making
- Integrated and Adaptive Water Planning and Management Systems
- Sharing and Optimizing a Limited Resource
- Sustainable Groundwater Management
- Effective, Efficient, Equitable Water Permitting Processes
- Basin-Specific Progress and Innovation



2025 Bills We Were Watching + What Passed

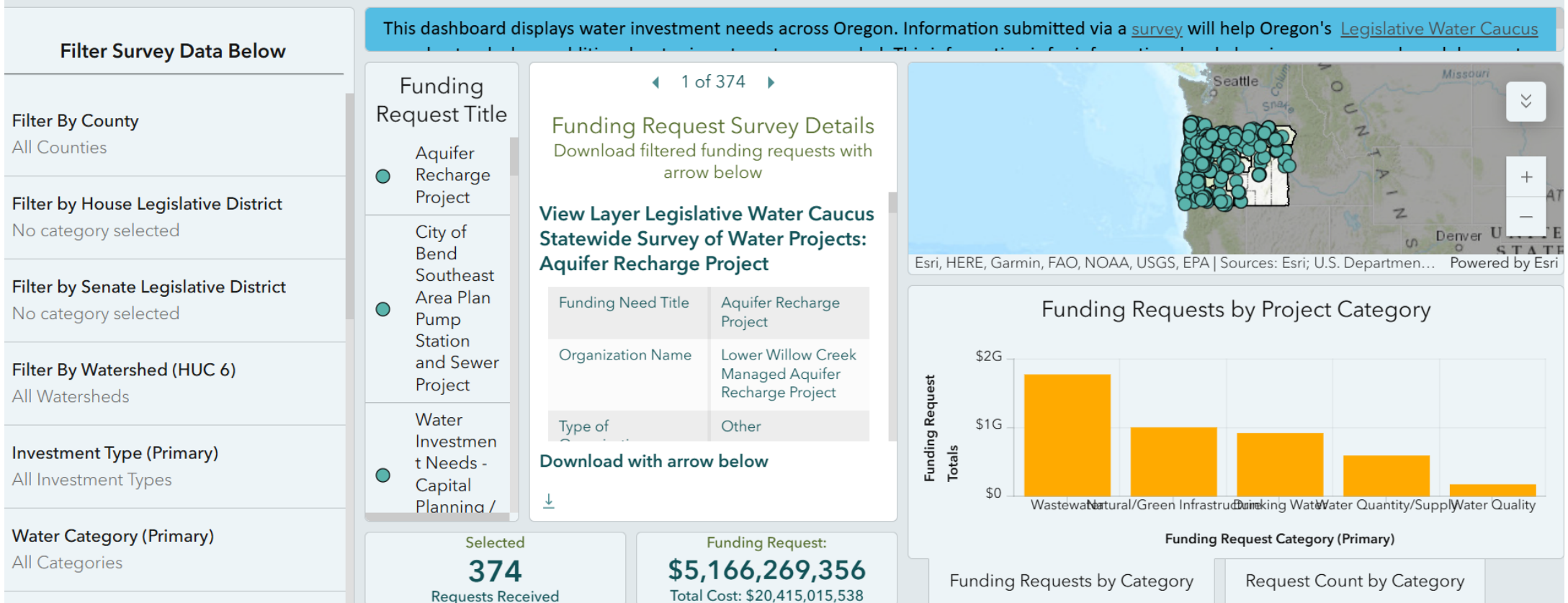
- Data, Research, Planning, Projects
 - HB 3106 – Integrated Water Data Portal
 - HB 3116, **SB 761**, HB 3114 – Development and Implementation of Water Management Plans
 - **HB 3806** – Deschutes Water Banking Pilot
 - HB 2988 – Removing Barriers to Groundwater Storage and Recharge Projects
 - **HB 2169** – Removing Barriers to Water Reuse Projects
- Permitting and Process Improvements
 - **HB 3342**, **HB 3544** – Water Rights Process Improvements
 - **HB 3364** – OWRD Funding Program Improvements
 - SB 1153 – Public Interest Review for Water Rights Transfers

Bills Of Interest to the Coast

- **HB 3372** - Allowing Exempt Groundwater Use for Small Commercial Gardens
- **HB 3814** - Adapting Water Quality Standards for Seafood Processors
- HB 3116 – Place-Based Integrated Water Resources Planning
- **HB 3525** – Landlord Water Quality Testing
- **HB 3932** – Living With Beaver Policies
- HB 3143 – Living With Beaver Funding
- What are you most interested in?

Statewide Water Investment Needs

≈ Oregon Legislative Water Caucus - Water Investment Needs Assessment ≈



Water Law 101

