



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ahead of World Water Day, Oregon Water Partnership recognizes progress in 2024 legislative session

SALEM, OREGON, March 20, 2024 – Oregon Water Partnership applauds the Oregon Legislature’s attention to important water issues during the 32-day “short session,” including creation of a \$570 million environmental restoration endowment with proceeds from the state’s 2022 settlement with Monsanto. Other OWP-supported investments include \$1 million for the Oregon Water Resources Department’s Well Abandonment, Repair and Replacement Fund (WARRF) to upgrade failing household wells, and \$282,735 for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife’s Klamath River fish reintroduction effort and related monitoring.

“This injection of dollars into the WARRF program will allow the state to resume accepting applications from domestic well users for upgrades and improvements to their wells,” said **Karen Lewotsky, rural partnerships lead and water policy director for Oregon Environmental Council**. “The fund targets low- to middle-income households, thus helping Oregon’s most vulnerable rural homeowners access safe drinking water.”

“Removal of the four lower Klamath River dams will be complete this year, opening over 400 miles of river that has been inaccessible to salmon for more than a century,” said **James Fraser, Oregon policy director for Trout Unlimited**. “This is our chance to study how native fish respond to the largest dam removal project in history. We’re thrilled that the Legislature seized this opportunity.”

Looking ahead to the 2025 “long session,” Oregon Water Partnership supports policies and investments that will improve the health and resiliency of Oregon’s water resources and the fish, families, and farms they support. Partnership priorities for the 2025 Legislature include:

- Advancing policies that protect and restore Oregon’s waters
- Defending against further depletion of rivers and groundwater aquifers
- Fully funding state natural resource agency programs
- Securing dollars for state grant programs that restore Oregon’s natural environment to the benefit of people, fish, and wildlife

Oregon Water Partnership appreciates the leadership and engagement of Representatives Helm, Owens, Hartman, Marsh, Gamba, Khanh Pham, Rayfield, and Sanchez, and Senators Dembrow, Golden, Taylor, and Wagner on water issues during the 2024 session.

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Oregon Water Partnership represents seven statewide conservation groups that work together to ensure abundant, cold, clean water to sustain our communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Our members: Environmental Defense Fund, Oregon Environmental Council, Sustainable Northwest, The Nature Conservancy in Oregon, Trout Unlimited, WaterWatch of Oregon, and Wild Salmon Center. Learn more at www.oregonwaterpartnership.org.