



TINA KOTEK
GOVERNOR

July 24, 2025

The Honorable Tobias Read
Secretary of State
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Senate Bill 5543 and House Bill 2803

Dear Secretary Read:

Today, I am signing HB 2803 and providing direction to the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) concerning water right transaction processing priorities. HB 2803 increases agency water right transaction fees by 50% and, along with approximately \$1.4 million in General Fund provided by SB 5543, allows continued service to individuals requesting water right transactions.

I appreciate the Legislature's efforts to prevent reductions to this program area and provide a funding pathway that allows for continuation of the current service level. Even without significant new resources, I expect that every reasonable effort will be made by the agency to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its water right processes. Recognizing the resource constraints, however, I am directing the agency to work with my staff to prioritize its efforts in a manner that is achievable and most likely to advance the State's water management goals to meet in-stream and out-of-stream needs.

Additionally, I expect the agency to use all available tools to achieve progress managing our water resource challenges. Significant policy work was completed this session to improve water right transaction processing statutes as well as contested case backlogs, including HB 3342 and HB 3544, which I anticipate will help the agency make progress on reducing the backlogs and improve customer service. I commend the legislature for advancing these bills and expect timely implementation from the agency.

Ensuring the agency's ability to meaningfully address Oregon's water management challenges into the future requires sustained attention from both the executive and legislative branches. I look forward to our continued partnership to modernize Oregon water laws, invest in key staffing

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to improve customer service, and evaluate mechanisms to adequately fund agency work to facilitate sustained progress toward the State's water management goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tina Kotek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "K".

Governor Tina Kotek

cc: Speaker of the House Julie Fahey
Senate President Rob Wagner

TK: smg