



from the office of

SENATOR DENNIS LINTHICUM

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 25, 2021

Contact: Dru Draper

dru.draper@oregonlegislature.gov

Water Resources Department Is Failing Water Users

SALEM, Ore. – On Wednesday, Senator Dennis Linthicum (R-Klamath Falls) voted against the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) budget because the bill did not include necessary reforms needed to better serve Oregon’s water users.

Senator Linthicum released the following statement:

“We should not be giving this agency more money without holding them accountable for the laundry list of failures in recent years. Part of this increase in funding is for legal bills that the Department has incurred because of its incompetence. They have been handed defeat after defeat in court for not following the law. The Department is advancing novel legal interpretations, new models, and other significant policy changes through specific cases, rather than setting forth a specific policy directive or engaging in rulemaking. This has caused individual water rights holders to litigate the Department’s new policies on a case-by-case basis. The myriad of cases being litigated is entirely due to these new policy interpretations that have been poorly documented, justified, or discussed within the public sphere.

“Klamath County has been especially negatively impacted by their gross negligence. They have denied water rights based on no evidence or science about the impact on rivers. Just last year, a court found that they unlawfully released water from the Upper Klamath Lake, forcing the Klamath Irrigation District (KID) to repeatedly pursue court action to get the Department to do its job.

“I will continue to oppose more funding to the Department until there is a change in leadership and a change in direction that will uphold the law and water rights.”

Watch Senator Linthicum’s full speech on the Senate floor [here](#).

###