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September 9, 2025

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chairman
House Committee on Natural Resources
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jared Golden
U.S. House of Representatives
1107 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Westerman and Representative Golden:

Thank you for your bipartisan leadership in advancing legislation to address some of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) implementation issues that frequently cause delays and significant additional costs for critical water conservation and development projects. The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) firmly agrees there are better ways to efficiently and transparently review environmental impacts of projects, and write to express our support for the Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act, which will help move this important environmental law in the right direction.

OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support the protection of water rights and promote the wise stewardship of water resources statewide. OWRC members are local governmental entities, which include irrigation districts, water control districts, drainage districts, water improvement districts, and other agricultural water suppliers that deliver water to roughly one-third of all irrigated land in Oregon. Our members are actively planning and implementing water infrastructure projects with a myriad of economic and environmental benefits, including increased water conservation and enhanced resilience to drought and water scarcity.

For decades, the National Environmental Policy Act has played a valuable role in guiding federal decision-making. However, the process has become excessively drawn out, costly, and vulnerable to obstruction, often delaying projects that would upgrade facilities to save water, protect species, and deliver reliable water supply for the benefit of our communities and ecosystems. Even worse, the known time and expense of the NEPA review process often leads water managers to skip beneficial projects altogether.

The SPEED Act provides practical solutions focused on setting clearer timelines, reducing duplicative reviews, and narrowing opportunities for misuse of the process. We believe the

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common-sense provisions in the bill will allow projects to move forward more efficiently while still ensuring careful environmental consideration.

As you are addressing important NEPA processes, we would also like to note that the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) has also recently become another very time-consuming and expensive review process. For many western water users, the facilities relied upon to deliver water are over 50 years old, and even the simplest improvements can require months or years long reviews, adding unnecessary and often duplicative processes. As you are addressing the overall permitting process, we hope you will consider also addressing this process for older facilities that have been continually operated for over 50 years.

Thank you for your commitment to finding a balanced approach that protects natural resources while enabling progress. Provisions of the SPEED Act will help ensure beneficial projects in Oregon and across the nation can move forward and implement measures providing a more secure water future for farms, communities, and fish and wildlife.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'April Snell', is positioned above the printed name.

April Snell

OWRC Executive Director