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**Testimony before the House Agriculture and Environment Committee on
SB 199**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Chair Witt and members of the committee:

Oregon Environmental Council is pleased to support SB 199, removing the sunset on Oregon's split-season instream water leasing program. We do so in collaboration with other members of the conservation community, and with water users alike, as reflected in a joint letter submitted to the committee. This group of organizations identified SB 199 as a high priority, low hanging fruit bill that we would all like to see passed this session.

Split season instream leasing is an example of the kind of tool Oregon needs to manage our water resources today and in the future. It works within the state water code and the rules of prior appropriation, and provides greater flexibility to get water where it's needed, when it's needed. This voluntary tool enables water users to be compensated for leaving water instream during the time of the year when fish need it most, while putting their water to use for irrigation or other uses the rest of the year.

Last year, when OEC interviewed irrigators and water experts around the state to develop our "Making Water Work" report on agricultural water efficiency, we identified continuing the split season leasing program as one of our key recommendations. The program benefits stream flows and water users, and it should continue to be part of Oregon's toolbox for managing our precious water resources.

We ask you to please support SB 199; do not let Oregon lose this valuable tool.