ROGUE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL

18 May 2017

Capital Construction Subcommittee

Subject: **SB 5530 -** Testimony in Support of Lottery funds for the Bradshaw Drop Canal Piping Project

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

Little Butte Creek is an incredibly important watershed within the Rogue Basin for native fish. Tributaries produce large numbers of Coho Salmon, listed as threatened by NOAA Fisheries, and both summer and winter steelhead while the lower end of the mainstem of is important for winter steelhead and fall Chinook Salmon production. Pacific Lamprey, struggling up and down the West Coast and deemed an important resource by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indian Tribe, also use Little Butte Creek extensively for spawning and rearing.

Water quality is one of the major limiting factors in Little Butte Creek and irrigation is one of the main threats to high quality water. Irrigation takes water out of the stream and many irrigators in the Little Butte Creek area use "wild" flood irrigation techniques that carry sediment, fertilizers, chemicals, bacteria, and warm temperatures to the stream. These pollutants impair native fish species survival, limit contact recreation, and require expensive treatment at Medford Water Commission's water treatment plant. Dedicating even a small amount of irrigation water to instream flow will improve water quality conditions and reducing irrigation return flow along Little Butte Creek will increase water quality for native fish, recreation, and drinking water.

The piping of a long section of Rogue River Valley Irrigation District (RRVID) canal near Bradshaw Drop will facilitate the conversion from "wild" flood to other irrigation practices and, will result in converting some irrigation water to instream flow. Benefits from this work are important to fulfilling Rogue River Watershed Council's mission, and, we wholeheartedly support RRVID's Bradshaw Drop Piping Project. Our hope is that other irrigation districts in the area take note and join the effort to minimize their irrigation return flows and dedicate conserved water instream.

Sincerely,

Brian R. Barr
Executive Director

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