



**Oregon Cattlemen's Association**  
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May 29, 2024

The Honorable Kate Lieber, Chair  
Senate Committee on Rules and Executive Appointments  
Oregon State Legislature  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**RE: Senate Confirmation of Ivan Gall for Director, Oregon Water Resources Department**

Chair Lieber and Committee Members:

Founded in 1913, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association ("OCA") serves as the voice of the cattle industry in Oregon. Our members are engaged in agriculture and ranching across the State, providing food and essential byproducts within Oregon and throughout the world. Water is of critical importance to OCA and its members for growing crops and raising livestock. As the Oregon Senate considers the confirmation of Ivan Gall for Director of the Oregon Water Resources Department, OCA asks that it carefully consider the following priorities that are essential to the cattle industry:

**Property Rights Protection** – Water rights are property rights that are indispensable to property value and agricultural production. It is important to OCA that the Director of the Oregon Water Resources Department ("OWRD") protect existing water rights and maintain historic water use authorizations, such as the groundwater exemption for livestock.

**Local Planning** – Water needs and challenges cannot be adequately addressed with one-size-fits-all approaches. The OWRD Director should prioritize place-based planning with adequate representation of all stakeholders, including agriculture and ranching. OWRD's Director should also carry forward local plans once developed, by implementing the local priorities through basin plans.

**Increased Storage** – Above and below ground storage is essential as surface water and groundwater supplies become more limited. It is critically important that the OWRD Director provide leadership regarding storage opportunities and feasible locations and work proactively with applicants and project partners to store more usable quantities of water throughout the State.

**Sound Science** – OCA's members have witnessed and experienced far too many decisions based on inadequate information, resulting in inconsistent and arbitrary water use and water allocation decisions. OWRD's Director must identify existing data gaps, and work to gather necessary information that will be used meaningfully by the agency when making decisions. Moreover, decisions should be transparent, defensible, and consistent.

**Timely Decision-Making** – OWRD is woefully behind in processing applications and referring protests to contested cases. OCA believes this is a result of overly complicated and rigid policies, procedures, and interpretations. OWRD's Director must be able to "get the job done" efficiently and within statutory deadlines.

**Flexible Problem-Solving** – Oregon’s water challenges are not static. OWRD leadership must be dedicated to figuring out new ways to address water needs. It is important to OCA that OWRD’s Director is open to new ideas. Moreover, it is essential that the agency move away from a defensive, unmovable mindset, to that of collaboration and problem-solving.

As you move forward with the OWRD Director confirmation hearing, OCA asks that the Oregon Senate take the above considerations into account. OCA also asks that the Legislature hold the new OWRD Director accountable to their promises regarding how they plan to lead the agency and address these concerns. Thank you for your careful consideration of this important appointment confirmation for Oregon’s cattle industry, now and in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "McElligott", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matt McElligott, President  
Oregon Cattlemen’s Association