

Statement of the Oregon Land And Water Alliance (OLAWA) in opposition to SB 710, 713, and 718.

My name is Paul Lipscomb, and I live in the Cloverdale area outside of Sisters in Central Oregon. I am the Vice President of OLAWA, the Oregon Land And Water Alliance. The Oregon Land And Water Alliance is a 501c3 organization, and its purpose is to educate the public to promote and protect the Rule of Law on all local issues relating to land and water use as well as fish and wildlife.

Climate conditions in Oregon are very different today than they once were. Our water resources are more limited and their future is more threatened. Similarly, our fish and wildlife resources are much more endangered now than ever before.

According to OPB News report on 2/14/2022: “The American West’s megadrought deepened so much last year that it is now the driest in at least 1,200 years.” And the High Country News reported on June 29, 2022 that:

“The Western U.S. is experiencing its worst drought since 800 A.D. Across the West, state leaders are bracing against the long-term impacts of aridification. In late April, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown added four additional counties to the ‘drought emergency’ tally—now, half the state (including Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson Counties) is in a state of emergency.”

All three of these bills, SB 710, SB 713, and SB 718 would further fragmentize our water laws in Oregon by adding new laws to benefit a few special interest groups at the expense of all the other citizens of Oregon. Each and every Oregonian has an important interest in all of Oregon’s water resources.

Our Secretary of State, Shemia Fagan, has recently published an audit that showcases some of the many deleterious effects of Oregon’s current fragmented “system” of water regulation and management. The audit paints a dire picture of our declining water resources, as well as the lack of any kind of coordinated plan to address either our current problems or the many future threats to Oregon’s waters. And these waters belong to all of us, to each and every Oregonian, no matter where they might live.

All of our state leaders, including every member of this assembly, have a duty to conserve and safeguard our public waters just like every other public resource in our state. Yet there exists no coordinated statewide plan to do so, and in the meantime our wells in Central and Eastern Oregon are going dry, and our rivers and streams are now but shallows of their former selves.

Each of these three Senate Bills under consideration today, SB 710, SB 713, and SB 718, would only further fragmentize our already broken public water regulation system to the detriment of all other water users, and to the general public whose public water is already stretched too far.

Please table SB 710, SB 713, and SB 718.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views and our concerns.

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