



284 E Water St, Stayton, OR 97383

To: Chair Jeff Golden, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Senate Committee On Natural Resources

RE: Senate Bill 718,

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Girod and Members of the Committee:

The Santiam Water Control District (SWCD) is a multifunction water district that diverts water from the North Santiam River and the Detroit Reservoir to irrigate over 17,000 acres. I serve as it's General Manager. I have included some professional background to give context to my comments. I have held the position of General Manager of the District for 13 years and have also served as manager of an irrigation district in Eastern Oregon (Walla Walla river ID). I have managed the delivery of Irrigation water under a wide variety of extremes, including the drought of 2015 and regulation under ESA. A District never intends to forfeit water rights and requiring process during emergencies is counterproductive.

WATER LAWS SHOULD NOT REQUIRE WATER USE DURING DROUGHT

Our system of water laws should not require the use of water during a drought solely to ensure beneficial use and prevent forfeiture. It is true that if a user's water right is regulated off during drought, a rebuttal to forfeiture can be made. This is only true if the user is regulated off, there are no means for a user to voluntarily forego irrigating and not add another year to the forfeiture time clock. The only methods then left to protect a water right is to use the water or transfer to other lands or instream. I would emphasize that a transfer requires the payment of fees and most often a user willing to forego irrigating is willing because they have low value needs/crops or are suffering economic or some other hardship.

THE BILL WILL INCREASE WATER AVAILABLE FOR ALL USES DURING DROUGHT.

Senior water right users that would choose to voluntarily forego irrigation would enhance water availability for junior users during a drought, decreasing the likelihood of not having water available. This would also increase the likelihood that instream needs where met I.E., if all water users choose to forego irrigating all water would not be diverted and be left instream even though water rights were not transferred to an instream use.

THE BILL MAKES COMMON SENSE.

The bill provides a small tool for Oregonians to support their state, their ecologies, and their neighbors during times of need. We should not penalize or discourage those that want to contribute.

Thank you for your consideration.

Brent Stevenson

Brent Stevenson, District Manager Santiam Water Control District