



February 27, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Re: Support for HB 3164 (from TU Project Manager Perspective)

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Humphreys and I am the Northeast Oregon Flow Restoration Project Manager at Trout Unlimited.

I live in Lostine, Oregon and work on flow restoration throughout the Grande Ronde basin.

My focus at Trout Unlimited is working with the agricultural community in Northeast Oregon to find creative ways to balance instream and out of stream water needs.

Split season leases are one of the primary tools we use in our work, and we've found them to be incredibly useful because they are not "all or nothing" with regard to which party uses the water right in a single season. Split season leases allow irrigation to occur in the early season, typically March or April until mid to late July (when water availability generally supports both instream and out of stream needs), and then allows a change in use to protect water instream during the late season when critically low flows negatively impact Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook rearing, migration and spawning.

I am currently working with 7 different landowners engaged in split season leases on Catherine Creek near Union, Oregon, and the Lostine River in Wallowa County, representing about 1,300 acres of irrigated land.

Typically, these leases are structured where the irrigator turns off in mid-July or early August and their remaining water right is protected instream through Oregon Water Resources Department. We have significant evidence, especially in the Lostine River, that water protected through split season leases improves passage of migrating spring/summer Chinook salmon. My experience using this tool has been that it provides flexibility for the irrigator as well as our program and that it upholds both the environmental and agricultural values of our communities.

I encourage you to pass this bill out of committee.

Sincerely,

Jessica Humphreys
NE Oregon Flow Restoration Project Manager
Trout Unlimited
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