



## West Extension Irrigation District

---

P. O. Box 100; Irrigon, OR 97844-0100  
541-922-3814 (ph) 541-922-9775 (fax)  
westex@oregontrail.net

March 6, 2023

To: Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water  
Re: HB3231

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Hartman, Vice-Chair Owen and the members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

This letter is in support of HB3231. As farmers, ranchers and irrigators continue to face water challenges throughout Oregon, the idea of reusing Class A water for agricultural and irrigation purposes is a concept that simply makes sense.

West Extension Irrigation District (WEID) is an irrigation district located in northeast Oregon and delivers water to 10,479 acres of land in Umatilla and Morrow counties. It is the downstream diverter of the Umatilla Basin Project. As such, it relies on return flows for irrigation. In the 26 years that I have been at the District, I have seen these flows diminish from an average of 80 cfs during the summer months to an average of 45 cfs today.

The WEID looks at every opportunity to shore up its water supply, and one of these was the Hermiston Reuse Water Project. It receives 930 acre-feet of Class A treated water each season from May 1 to November 1. This water is an important part of the supplemental irrigation water for the patrons: it is a sustainable, reliable source that saves WEID \$16,000 annually in pumping costs.

The journey to receiving this water spanned nine years and included the WEID, City of Hermiston (City), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Once each entity determined this was a compatible project, they moved forward. The WEID had three things to do:

- 1) Assure support from its patrons. The first general meeting that WEID held with its water users in 2010 to talk about the project was well attended. Folks had a lot of questions and there was resistance by some folks. However, by the end of that meeting, the patrons wanted to know how long it would take to build and where can we find more recycled or reused water.
- 2) Work with Reclamation to allow the water to come into the canal. This was a new concept for Reclamation, but the regional folks got on-board and worked to license and permit this water to enter the WEID federal canal.
- 3) Get its canal ready to receive the water. Working with DEQ, we changed the historical uses of our canal to how it is being used today: eliminating domestic, fish and habitat uses.

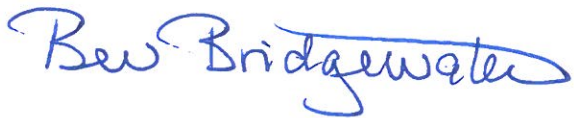
Reclamation and DEQ had standards to change, and they were completed in 2012. The project was built and the DEQ permit to the City was completed in 2015. On August 16, 2016, the first water from the City's Class A treatment plant was sent to the WEID main canal.

Following up on this success, the City of Umatilla was able to get a permit from Reclamation and DEQ to send industrial wastewater to the WEID canal. It was a different process, from DEQ's perspective, but the process for WEID and Reclamation was already in place.

In the last two years, a handful of folks from agencies around the State have contacted WEID about the Reuse Project. While we had hoped that a path for others would have been established by now, that isn't the case. Yes, Reclamation has put standard guidelines in place for reuse and related projects, and agencies can get through its process fairly quickly. State agencies, however, seem to provide little, if any, guidance to potential reuse water projects. It seems they have not had the time or funding to develop standards that can be replicated for timely permitting of reuse and related projects.

With the legislature's financial support and assistance, a cooperative effort that will study how to move this concept forward will make a big difference to the entities already poised to make such projects happen. We have one success story in Oregon, it is time for others.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this HB3231.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bev Bridgewater". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bev Bridgewater  
District Manager