

Written testimony submitted in support of Oregon HB2929 scheduled for hearing on March 23, 2023:

I am a small livestock farmer in Jackson County whose animals' lives depend on having adequate water from our river to irrigate our pastures in the Applegate River Watershed. We and the many other livestock, produce, grape, cannabis, and hemp farmers who operate within the laws governing water rights are unfairly and irreparably harmed when violators continue to take water illegally throughout the growing season while our crops and pastures dry up because there is not enough water to accommodate the illegal users added on to the legally allocated water. It is hard enough to have sufficient water for our legal farming operations without having that water stolen by violators.

HB2929 is a vital strengthening of the availability of injunctions as an effective procedural way to halt illegal water use while the administrative process for imposing substantive remedies can wind its way through the system. With injunctive relief quickly available, the illegal users cannot simply wait it out until autumn and then pay a fine out of their ill-gotten gains while those of us who live within the law have no remedy for our ruined crops and pastures.

Those who may object that there is not enough manpower to enforce more effective laws or OWRD should not take on new authority do not represent real farmers' interests. Injunctions are a time-honored and appropriate mechanism for preventing irreparable harm when irreplaceable resources like water are involved.

HB2929 is a straightforward and even-handed remedy whose only purpose is to prevent economic harm to thousands of law-abiding farmers in Oregon caused by other users violating the law. If nothing else, basic fairness supports passage of HB2929.

I urge passage of HB2929.

Thank you for your time and for your service in support of Oregon farmers.

Priscilla Weaver
Jacksonville OR
priscilla@saltmarshranch.com