

21MAR22

TO: Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs.

FROM: Walla Walla River Irrigation District

SUBJECT: Testimony in Support of SB 956-2

Dear Chair Senator Manning Jr, Vice Chair Senator Thatcher, Senator Gorsek,
Senator Linthicum, Senator Woods

The Walla Walla River Irrigation District writes to you in support of SB 956.

The Walla Walla River Irrigation District(WWRID) consists of approximately 3400 acres of irrigated farmland in the Walla Walla Valley, which is located on the Oregon side of the state line in Milton Freewater, OR. Our source of water is the Walla Walla River in which we use to irrigate orchards, vineyards, row crops, pasture and livestock. Our surface water rights are the most senior in our Valley, after Treaty Rights.

In the year 2000, our District as well as Hudson Bay Irrigation District (OR) and Gardena Farms Irrigation District 13 (WA) was part of a Civil Penalty Agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife, under the Endangered Species Act to protect Bull Trout and Steelhead in the Walla Walla River. Our District bypasses almost 1/3 of our aggregate total to suffice the minimum flow requirements for these species and others. With this bypass agreement in place for over 20 years now, our Districts have realized how important the reciprocal relationships are to the Valley that will help re-establish the fishery runs and the continued need for irrigation water. In partnership with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), a collaboration of mutual understanding and respect between tribes and irrigators has proven necessary and mutually beneficial in order to build and promote the Valley's future water management planning efforts. However, it is important to point out that there is a shared frustration between the collaborating parties because there is no protection of our water's bypass flows across state lines, resulting from a lack of a Bi-State Agreement.

The Walla Walla 2050 Strategic Plan is a comprehensive approach for our Valley's water management issues, while keeping community, economic and environmental needs at the forefront. It is led by the Tri-Sovereigns which consists WA Dept of Ecology (DOE), OR Water Resources Dept (OWRD) and CTUIR with direction given by a 20+ person Advisory Committee consisting of a diverse group of various stakeholders from both sides of the state line. The task for two states sharing a Water Basin and coming to an amiable solution is a tall order and very complex. This planning effort is the unifier for Basin stakeholders on both sides of the state line to coalesce around common interests and goals and pave the path forward for future generations.

OR SB 956-2, along with companion legislation: WA HB 1322, will provide the legal and regulatory framework for Oregon and Washington to work together to promote the equitable allocation and management of developed water resources and water supplies from projects resulting from the Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan

The Walla Walla River Irrigation District fully supports Oregon SB 956-2

Thank you

Walla Walla River Irrigation District

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