

Submitter: Peter Salant

On Behalf Of: Salant Family Ranch

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure: HB2929

My name is Peter Salant. I am the owner of Salant Family Ranch in the Applegate Valley here in Southern Oregon. I have been raising beef cattle here since 1995 and own 109 acres which is partially irrigated pasture.

My water source is the Little Applegate River off of which I have water rights from three irrigation ditches, which are all maintained by us as landowners. All these ditches have been restricted by the watermaster of the Oregon Water Resources Department during each of the last three years due to severe drought conditions here in southern Oregon.

The theft of water for cannabis and hemp operations on the Little Applegate River is well documented by water authorities here. We all know this is happening and we need remedies to stop this water theft immediately when these operations are deemed to be happening. This bill would provide that remedy.

The current need for water violations to work their way through a long administrative process does not address the needs on the ground, since many times that takes months to get through and by then the water is gone and the need for irrigation is long past. This has affected all of us up and down the Little Applegate in various ways depending on how many cattle we are feeding or how many crops we are growing. There is no doubt that this occurring.

I understand that the Farm Bureau opposes this bill, and being a member of the Farm Bureau I do not understand why they would oppose this bill and side with those that are stealing water rather than those who are on the side of law and order. That is kind of vexing to me.

But be that as it may, I think the bill would remedy this whole situation and bring relief to the landowners that are legally using their water rights.

Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony to you Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Owens and Hartman, and members of the committee.