



## West Extension Irrigation District

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February 9, 2025

To: Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water  
Re: HB 2169

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

This letter is in support of HB 2169. My perspective is from an agricultural supplier of reuse water to our District patrons. As farmers, ranchers and irrigators continue to face water challenges throughout Oregon, the idea of reusing 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. It delivers water to 10,479 acres of land (over 1100 water users) in Umatilla and Morrow counties. It is the downstream diverter of the Umatilla Basin Project (Umatilla River). As such, it relies on return flows for irrigation. In the 28 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. Thus, WEID is a water-short district, relying on supplemental water from the Columbia River to meet demands.

The WEID has been receiving Class A reuse water from the City of Hermiston's recycle facility since August 16, 2016. This water enters our canal, mixes with canal water and becomes part of our delivery system. In 2024, we received 1106.7 acre-feet of reuse water from May 1 to November 1. This is enough to irrigate 369 acres of land at 3.0 acre-feet per acre. We do not, in fact, irrigate additional land, but use the water to supplement our water supply from the Umatilla River, thus leaving water in the river for the benefit of fisheries.

The journey to receiving this water spanned eight years and included the WEID, City of Hermiston (City), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Other agencies consulted were Department of Fish & Wildlife and Oregon Water Resources Department. 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 WEID held several public meetings with its patrons where the project was reviewed, discussed and supported.
- 2) Work with Reclamation to allow the water to come into the canal. WEID is a federally-owned project. This was a new concept for Reclamation, but the regional folks got on-board. Now, Reclamation has directives and standards for such projects to move forward.
- 3) Get its canal ready to receive the water. Working with DEQ, WEID eliminated several beneficial uses in the canal, including fish, aquatic life, domestic and fishing. DEQ established water quality standards for the remaining uses, including, irrigation, livestock, industrial, contact recreation, and hydropower.

The process from discussion to DEQ's issuance of the permit was five years.

In the last several years, folks from agencies around the State have contacted WEID about the reuse project with ideas, questions and interested partners for their own project. We had hoped that a path for others would have been established by now, that isn't the case. While the federal government has set its standards, it seems the State has not had the capacity to develop guidelines/procedures 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 the concept of reuse forward will make a big difference to the entities already poised to make such projects happen. The idea of reuse can expand to include municipal and industrial water that will benefit Oregonians. We are only limited by the lack of having resources to address the concepts in front of us.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this HB 2169.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bev Bridgewater". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bev Bridgewater  
District Manager