

Submitter: Kyle Collins
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB427

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 427 which should provide meaningful oversight and help safeguard streamflows during water right transfers. Oregon's water resources, both surface and groundwater, are one of the most valuable and vulnerable components of our state's natural landscapes. These water resources contribute in countless ways to the health of our citizens, our robust agricultural economy, and the stability of our wildfire populations, including increasingly threatened salmonids. These water resources belong to all of all us and should be managed responsibly over the long-term, taking the most sound scientific evidence available, and sticking to that evidence regardless of short term incentives that may suggest otherwise.

Oregon water right laws, like many in the western states, contain damaging language and an outdated loopholes which have allowed the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to approve applications for water right transfers without adequate consideration of whether the change will harm streamflows. While OWRD may be following the letter of the law, we need to accept that these standards are outdated and based on an incomplete accounting of the limits of our water resources and capacity in the modern area. Ultimately, water rights transfers have too often resulted in lower surface water levels which directly harm fish and other aquatic wildlife, impair residential water quality, and decrease scenic and recreation values. These resources create a massive and sustain source of economic growth and and public health benefits which must be accounted for during water right transfers.

The language of Senate Bill 427 does significant more to safeguard our streams—and the fish, water quality, and scenic values they support—by ensuring voluntary water right changes won't further diminish streamflows in already impacted watersheds.

This narrow fix closes a dangerous and antiquated loophole, and brings modern environmental values into Oregon's outdated water right transfer review process.

I support the intention of SB 427 and urge you to take the action necessary to protect our water resources.

Sincerely,

-Kyle Collins
Bend, OR