

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

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

I am a retired Forest Service hydrologist who worked on the Wallowa-Whitman NF in eastern Oregon for almost 16 years. I continue to make eastern Oregon my home. I have seen firsthand the impact of water diversions on streams, riparian areas, and fish that depend on adequate and consistent streamflows. It is with this background that I urge you to support Senate Bill 427, a bill that would safeguard streamflows in water right transfers. Given increased frequency of drought and wildfire, events that have a huge impact on eastern Oregon, we need to be focusing on how to improve stream flows and stream/riparian health, and SB 427 will help do that by preventing further diminishment of stream flows.

SB 427 addresses an outdated loophole. This loophole currently allows OWRD to approve applications for water right transfers without adequate consideration of whether the change will harm streamflows and the human and wild communities that depend on healthy stream and riparian systems. Lower water levels in a stream hurt fish, impair water quality, lead to decreased riparian health as water tables drop, and decrease scenic and recreation values. These negative changes make our landscapes and our communities much more vulnerable to drought and wildfire.

Senate Bill 427 helps safeguards our streams by ensuring voluntary water right changes won't further diminish streamflows. This narrow fix closes a dangerous loophole and brings into an assessment of any transfer science, risk assessment, and modern environmental values into Oregon's outdated water right transfer review process. Our human, fish and wildlife communities will be the beneficiaries.

Given the changes already occurring in the timing of snowmelt and wildfire and drought frequencies, impacts that are being felt across Oregon, we must not allow stream flows and stream/riparian health to be further compromised. I urge your support of SB 427 and the life-sustaining streamflows it will safeguard.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Fouty, PhD  
Hydrologist/Soils Specialist  
Retired USDA Forest Service