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

Most of Oregon's streams are over-appropriated in summer, and groundwater aquifers are showing signs of overuse across the state (see maps below). This means that many new water demands are being supplied by modifying existing water rights. Water right holders can apply to the Oregon Water Resources Department to change that water right (a process called a "transfer") so that it can serve a new type of use, extract from a new point, or move to a new place of use.

But while existing laws for issuance of new water rights don't allow approval if it would harm imperiled fish, water right changes get a pass—an outdated loophole in Oregon's water laws lets these changes happen without looking at environmental impact. For the 97% of Oregon stream miles that lack instream water rights, there is currently no mechanism to safeguard instream values from harmful impacts of certain water right changes— even if a fish-bearing stream would be dewatered.

Please support SB427 to ensure that this loophole closes and cannot be taken advantage of.