

Submitter: Heather Ikeler
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1153

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

I support Senate Bill 1153 to safeguard fish habitat and water quality in water right transfers.

Acre for acre the temperate forests of the Pacific Northwest sequester and store more carbon than any others on earth. Salmon carry nutrients upstream that allow trees to grow larger and subsequently store even more carbon. Healthy streams are critical for addressing the climate chaos we are currently experiencing.

The water in our streams is our state's lifeblood. It grows our salmon and our food, and it fuels our families. It ties us to our neighbors upstream and downstream. It belongs to all of us.

Yet for far too long, an outdated loophole has allowed the Oregon Water Resources Department to approve applications for water right transfers without adequate consideration of whether the change will harm our streams. Lower water levels in a stream can hurt fish, impair water quality, and decrease scenic and recreation values.

Senate Bill 1153 safeguards our streams—and the fish habitat, water quality, and cultural values they support—by ensuring the state doesn't grant permission for voluntary water right changes that further harm fish habitat and water quality. This fix closes a dangerous loophole and brings modern environmental values into Oregon's outdated water right transfer review process.

I urge your support of SB 1153 and the life-sustaining streams it will safeguard.

Sincerely,
Heather Ikeler