

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

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire  
Re: Testimony in support of SB 1153  
From: Becky Orf, Ashland

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire:

I have spent much time hiking along the Rogue River and rafting on its waters. Parts of it are designated as "Wild and Scenic" by the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It is a beautiful river enjoyed by thousands for recreation and fishing, as well as being a habitat for fish and wildlife. It provides drinking water for over 200,000 people in Southern Oregon.

The Rogue River basin has an extensive system of water rights and use. This bill would have a direct impact on how water rights impact water quality and fish habitat in the Rogue River by ensuring that changes to water rights are reviewed for environmental impacts. Under current law, the state can approve water rights transfers and similar changes to existing water rights without considering impacts to stream-flows and the fish and water quality they support. As users of legal water rights often make changes that can have negative water quality impacts, this loophole nullifies Oregon's ability to protect instream values on the Rogue River, as well as hundreds of streams across the state. SB 1153 would close this harmful regulatory loophole in Oregon's water transfer laws that allow changes to an existing water right without any environmental review.

I urge you to support and move SB 1153 to passage.