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

SB 1153 seeks to protect in-stream habitat for sensitive, threatened or endangered aquatic species where these resources are not already protected, and to prevent continued water quality impairment on streams that are water quality limited. Oregon already has twenty-five aquatic species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. Ten species are listed on Oregon's Endangered Species Act list. Senate Bill 1153 seeks to prevent additional listings on these federal and state registers by protecting in-stream habitat and preventing further degradation to water quality on those streams that are identified as water-quality limited.

Oregon has been a leader in establishing programs that support protecting and restoring aquatic species that are imperiled by habitat loss, out-of-stream over appropriations, or other actions that are detrimental to their survival. For instance, the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds was created to help recover Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Steelhead, and amphibious populations, as well as to help restore the ecological health of Oregon's rivers and watersheds. Yet, the current regulations do not provide adequate protection for in-stream habitat and water quality when water rights are transferred from one party to another. Senate Bill 1153 is designed to address this lack of foresight and protection. In addition, SB 1153 directs the Water Resources Department to confer with affected tribal nations when such water rights transfers are being reviewed so that their sovereign interests can be considered when water right transfers are submitted. As such, SB 1153 will address a hole in the regulatory fabric that Oregon has developed to protect sensitive and endangered aquatic species and water quality and ensure that Oregon's residents are included in future uses of the state's water resources. Consequently, SB 1153 will also help maintain the natural environment and quality of life for Oregon's residents, as well as the biota that make Oregon unique and the envy of other regions nationally and internationally.

I urge the Senate and Legislature to pass Senate Bill 1153.