

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

Dear Oregon State Legislators,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1153. This bill is a misguided attempt to solve a non-existent problem and threatens Oregon's ability to manage water resources efficiently and responsibly.

SB 1153 would severely impede the crucial process of water rights transfers, which are essential when water right holders need to change their point of diversion, point of appropriation, type of use, or place of use. This flexibility is vital, especially considering that new water rights are increasingly scarce.

The bill disregards the existing public review requirements already in place through the Oregon Water Resource Department's (OWRD) water rights transfer process. By adding superfluous layers of bureaucratic review, SB 1153 would have a chilling effect on the efficient use of water throughout our state, primarily due to the threat of litigation from activist third parties.

Furthermore, OWRD is already struggling with a significant backlog and is seeking to increase water user fees by 135%. Adding more responsibilities to an already overburdened department is both impractical and counterproductive.

Key concerns with SB 1153 include:

Limited Flexibility: The bill's vague and broad environmental assessments would severely restrict water users' ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Increased Litigation Risk: SB 1153 opens the door to years-long delays and costly litigation from third parties, without improving environmental protections.

Redundancy: The bill adds new, duplicative standards to a process already governed by strict anti-injury and anti-enlargement rules.

Lack of Stakeholder Input: The water user community has had no meaningful engagement in this ill-conceived policy proposal.

In conclusion, SB 1153 is an unnecessary and potentially harmful piece of legislation that threatens Oregon's water management capabilities. I urge you to oppose this bill

and instead focus on solutions that balance the needs of water users with environmental protection without adding undue bureaucratic burden.

Sincerely,