

Senate Committee Natural Resources and Wildfire
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for SB 1153

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1153. The Port of Morrow strongly opposes SB 1153 as currently written, due to its significant impacts on our region. Our region has always prioritized water innovation and heavily invested in collaborative, sustainable water management strategies. Unfortunately, this bill introduces unnecessary uncertainty and risks that could undermine these efforts.

Established in 1959, the Port of Morrow has grown into Oregon's second-largest port, second only to the Port of Portland. Strategically located along the Columbia River, the Port serves as a crucial hub for the distribution and export of food, forest products, cattle, and dairy products—commodities sourced not only from Oregon but also from Washington, Idaho, and other inland producers. Additionally, the Port houses a variety of food processors that depend on access to water for production, making water and water reuse vital for the long-term sustainability of both the Port and Oregon's agricultural economy.

Since its inception in 2013, the Columbia River-Umatilla Solutions Task Force (CRUST) has united 21 diverse stakeholders, including the Port of Morrow, to collaboratively address critical water management challenges in the Mid-Columbia region. The Northeast Oregon Water Association (NOWA), which emerged from this collaboration, has diligently implemented strategic initiatives such as optimizing water supplies and developing Columbia River pipelines to support sustainable practices. These place-based planning efforts have led to substantial investments—exceeding \$220 million—dedicated to infrastructure improvements and sustainable water management practices.

The Columbia and Umatilla rivers region stands as a model of successful collaborative management. Here, a diverse array of stakeholders came together to address complex water sustainability challenges through cooperative efforts. In contrast, SB 1153 was crafted in isolation, sidestepping the inclusive and proven process that has been instrumental in our region's achievements. This approach not only undermines the foundational principles of our region's collaboration but also threatens the stability of our carefully balanced management strategies, which have always prioritized the collective needs and contributions of all stakeholders involved.

As the legislature considers various water rights transfer bills this session, we urge this committee to recognize the success of the existing, collaboratively developed approaches like CRUST. We believe these established frameworks, which have proven effective in enhancing water sustainability, should guide future legislative actions and help avoid redundant or contradictory policies that could undermine our region's progress.

Given the complex and contentious nature of SB 1153 and other similar transfer bills introduced in this legislative session, it is essential for stakeholders to engage in a structured dialogue. We respectfully request that, should the Governor's Office or this Committee decide to move forward with this issue, we and other stakeholders in our region are included in the discussions. This involvement will ensure that all perspectives are considered in crafting a well-informed approach to water management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Mittelsdorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being more prominent than the last name "Mittelsdorf".

Lisa Mittelsdorf
Executive Director, Port of Morrow