

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

Testimony in Opposition to SB 1153

Water access is critical to Oregon's communities, especially in agriculture and rural areas. While I appreciate efforts to manage our water resources, this bill goes too far and risks doing more harm than good.

SB 1153 threatens to undermine the water rights transfer system, which is currently the only practical way for permitted users—farmers, ranchers, municipalities, and others—to adjust water access since new groundwater rights were effectively halted last year. Transfers aren't just a loophole; they're a lifeline. They let us adapt to changing needs, whether it's a dry year, a growing operation, or a neighbor agreeing to share unused rights. If this bill restricts or complicates that process, it could lock water use in place indefinitely, covering over 93% of Oregon's water sources. That's not management—it's paralysis.

I've read the testimonies from the Oregon Farm Bureau and other associations, and I share their concerns. Agriculture drives Oregon's economy, and water is its backbone. Shutting down transfers could strand producers who need flexibility to survive, especially with drought and regulatory pressures already squeezing us. This isn't about hoarding water—it's about keeping our farms, ranches, and towns viable.

The bill's intent might be to protect resources, but the impact could be devastating. Without clear alternatives for accessing water, SB 1153 doesn't solve problems—it creates them. I urge you to consider the ripple effects: lost production, higher costs, and rural communities left with no room to grow or adapt. Instead of tightening the screws, we need solutions that balance conservation with the realities of those who depend on water every day.

Thank you for your time and for reading this testimony. I respectfully ask you to vote no on SB 1153 and keep the transfer system workable for Oregonians who rely on it.