



March 26, 2025

Senator Jeff Golden, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR. 97301

Subject: Oppose Senate Bill 1153

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife:

As the Managing Agency for the Willamette Intake Facilities (WIF) Commission, we are writing to share our concerns with Senate Bill 1153. We urge you to oppose the bill as written. SB 1153 creates unnecessary barriers to effective water management and municipal water infrastructure projects. The WIF Commission is a multi-agency partnership dedicated to protecting the Willamette River as a drinking water source. The WIF Commission is composed of six partner agencies: the Tualatin Valley Water District (TVWD) and the cities of Beaverton, Hillsboro, Tigard, Sherwood, and Wilsonville. Collectively, our agencies provide nearly 500,000 residents and some of Oregon's largest, high-tech industries with essential drinking water services in Washington and Clackamas counties.

SB 1153 proposes changes to the water right transfer process that would introduce new challenges for drinking water providers, limiting their ability to efficiently manage existing water rights. The ability to transfer water rights is an essential tool that allows drinking water providers to respond to changing conditions, maintain infrastructure, and support population growth and community investment needs. Rather than improving water management, this bill would exacerbate existing administrative bottlenecks, adding further delays and complications to an already burdened system.

It is important to recognize that drinking water providers are already subject to a rigorous regulatory framework designed to guarantee responsible water use and environmental protection. For example, existing rules require municipalities to maintain fish persistence flows, measure and report water use, and implement conservation and efficiency programs. Additionally, any changes to water intake facilities must undergo an exhaustive permitting process, including compliance with Clean Water Act requirements, environmental impact assessments, and tribal consultations. These extensive regulatory requirements guarantee that drinking water providers balance the needs of both people and ecosystems, making additional layers of oversight redundant and unnecessarily burdensome.

We strongly recommend that, rather than advancing the bill as written, the legislature convene a workgroup or task force to facilitate a more comprehensive discussion among stakeholders. Given the complexity of SB 1153 and its potential to disrupt critical water supply operations, this would be a prudent first step. The WIF Commission welcomes the opportunity to



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participate in such discussions to identify balanced solutions that uphold the integrity of Oregon's water resources while promoting the continued delivery of safe and reliable drinking water.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of our concerns and remain committed to working collaboratively toward policies that promote both responsible water stewardship and the long-term sustainability of our state's water supply. Please do not hesitate to reach out should your committee wish to engage further with the WIF Commission on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul L. Matthews".

Paul L. Matthews

Chief Executive Officer

Tualatin Valley Water District

Managing Agency for the WIF Commission

cc: WIF Commission Membership