



HANS NELSON & SONS NURSERY

March 26, 2025

To: Sen. Jeff Golden, Sen. Todd Nash, Sen. Fred Girod, Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Sen. Kathleen Taylor, Rep. Jeff Helfrich, Sen. Daniel Bonham
From: Laura Shelton at Hans Nelson & Sons Nursery, Inc.
RE: SB 1153

Good afternoon. As a third-generation farmer actively running our nursery in Boring, I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 1153. Our small but dedicated team is a testament to the hard work and resilience of Oregon's agricultural community, and it is crucial that we protect our ability to operate effectively in the face of growing challenges.

Water is the lifeblood of our business and, indeed, of Oregon's agriculture as a whole. For generations, farmers in our state have relied on a water rights system rooted in seniority—a system that provides the reliability and security necessary for sustainable growth. Unfortunately, changes in Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) policy have made it increasingly difficult to secure new water rights. In this context, the ability to transfer existing rights has become vital for adapting to changing conditions and ensuring responsible water management.

SB 1153, however, threatens the very flexibility that our farmers need. By constraining existing water rights and imposing vague and broad environmental assessments, this bill undermines our ability to respond to challenges and protect our livelihoods. This is particularly concerning given Oregon agriculture's significant contribution to the state's economy. Policies that hinder agricultural practices risk not only our businesses but also the broader community and economy that depend on a thriving agricultural sector.

Furthermore, SB 1153 introduces unnecessary complexities with environmental assessments that overlap with existing regulations already enforced by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. These agencies already possess the authority to apply for instream water rights on any stream in Oregon, at any time, to protect aquatic species habitat and water quality. Thus, this legislation would merely create an unneeded mandate without enhancing environmental protections.

Moreover, the bill opens the door to potential delays and costly litigation. The burden of proof shifts unjustly onto water users, who must demonstrate that their transfer or application does not cause harm. This places an unreasonable and often unattainable burden on farmers who are simply trying to manage their resources wisely.

For these compelling reasons, I strongly urge you to reject SB 1153. It is imperative that we stand together to protect small businesses like ours and the individuals who dedicate their lives to sustaining them. By voting against this legislation, you will help ensure that we can continue to thrive and contribute positively to our community and economy.

Thank you for considering my perspective. I trust you will make a decision that supports the livelihoods of Oregon's farmers and the future of our agricultural sector.

Thank you for your time,

Laura Nelson Shelton