



Subject: Testimony in Opposition to SB 1153

Dear Chair Golden and Members of the Natural Resources Committee,

Ochoco Irrigation District is located in the Heart of Oregon in Crook County. We provide water to over 20,000 irrigated acres and nearly 900 patrons. The District owns Ochoco Reservoir and operates Prineville Reservoir under contract with the US Bureau of Reclamation. We are writing to oppose SB 1153 as proposed.

This bill would create new standards for how existing water rates are evaluated for transfers and places additional responsibilities on OWRD to make those evaluations on two new criteria. This will entail an extensive and time-consuming analysis that will further slow the already challenged transfer process. The current transfer process is prone to significant delays and this bill would make the transfer process nearly impossible to use moving forward. As a result, water users like OID will be unable to use this tool as a way to effectively manage the valuable resource we are trusted with.

Additionally, this bill was seemingly created without any advanced notice or input from water users or managers. It disregards the fact that state agencies currently already have the authority to provide information to OWRD and place conditions on water rights transfers as needed. The Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of State Lands, Department of Environmental Quality, and others are included in that list of agencies. This bill would expose all transfers, big or small, to protests by unrelated parties. This will lead to even more delays and potential litigation. The Water Resources Department doesn't have the resources to keep up with its current level of legal expenses much less these potential increases.

Finally, this bill just doesn't make sense. The legislature needs to focus on ensuring that water users have the tools necessary to manage water through enhanced water right flexibilities that lead to increased operational efficiencies. This includes instream water rights that would be seriously limited by this bill. Encumbering the Water Resources Department with unnecessary burdens will cause the system to grind to a halt and result in less efficient water management.

Please vote no on SB 1153.

Sincerely,

Bruce Scanlon

Manager, Ochoco Irrigation District