



NETWORK of OREGON
WATERSHED COUNCILS

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MEASURE: SB 1513
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SUBMITTED BY: Erik Kancler

February 2, 2012

Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court St. NE, Room 453
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: SB 1513 Split Season In Stream Water Leasing

Dear Chair Dingfelder and members of the committee:

The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, formed in 2006 to support the work of member watershed councils throughout the state. At present, there are more than 90 watershed councils working within their local communities on collaborative projects ranging from in stream flow and habitat restoration to community outreach, education and beyond.

In large part, watershed councils rely on the allocation of state lottery funds – as outlined by 2010's Measure 76 – to create diverse partnerships, leverage outside funding, and help ensure that the reach of and support for the state's investment in watershed health is truly statewide. Through their projects and partnerships, watershed councils play a significant role in creating jobs throughout the state.

On behalf of the Network office, I'm writing to encourage the Legislature's continued support for in-stream water leasing, which is an important – and completely voluntary – means of balancing the needs of irrigators with the goals of stream flow restoration. Split season leases allow irrigators to utilize a portion of their rights early during the irrigation season when water is needed most for crops and leave "un-used" portions of their rights in-stream later in the season, when it's of greatest benefit to fish.

In 2001, the Legislature allowed water users to utilize split season leasing, but established a sunset of January 2, 2014 on the practice. Lifting the sunset now would allow past successes to carry forward and encourage additional irrigators and partners to utilize this important tool to their mutual benefit.

Watershed councils throughout the state both promote and participate in split season leases, which from our perspective provides just one more tool to help councils, their partners, and other interests pursue their goals of watershed restoration throughout Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Erik Kancler
Executive Director