

Hampton Susan

Subject: FW: SB 153

From: Larson's Berry Creek Ranch [<mailto:berrycreekranch@centurytel.net>]
Sent: Sunday, February 05, 2012 11:38 PM
To: Sen Thomsen; Patrino Beth; Sen Ferrioli
Subject: SB 153

Senator Patrino, my name is Gordon Larson. My family and I own and operate a small cattle ranch near John Day. As fourth generation landowners in Oregon I am asking for your support of SB 153 permanently allowing split season leases on deeded in stream water rights to exceed a five year period. As rural landowners we are often guilty of immediately dismissing ideas that are generated by conservation groups as they tend to diminish our ability to effectively manage family farms and ranches by diminishing agriculture or private land/water rights. It has been my experience that all too often with the benefit of hindsight this has been true, however SB 153 is where I believe property owners and water environmental groups have found common ground.

In my case I own approximately 500 acres with several streams that support both wild salmon and steelhead runs. When I was first approached by a nonprofit environmental firm desiring to lease my water rights in late summer and leave it in stream for anadromous fish I was skeptical. However after closely examining their proposal and negotiating language that allowed me latitude in how the agreement was structured I entered into a 3 year split season lease. The lease allows me to irrigate for several months and complete our hay crop as usual. As we enter into late summer I will voluntarily shut my water off leaving it in stream for the health of the young salmon and steelhead fingerlings which survive better in the cool mountain streams that are often located on private lands. In return I will receive a modest payment that will offset my production loss several times over. I have always been conservation minded, however that mindset is coupled with the zealous recognition of what I believe is a significant effort by many to gain control over private lands and water, and the accompanying over burdensome government zoning and regulation that all too often take much but give back little.

Split season leases seem to buck that trend, and offer a meet in the middle type of agreement that both sides of the aisle should support. It allows for private landowners with deeded water rights to add value to their property by exercising their property rights to gain additional value from their property, while at the same time providing for a positive impact to the environment and healthy fish runs.

In these times when everyone seems so polarized around their party or their beliefs it is refreshing to see the Senate recognizes the importance of a bill that allows typically conservative landowners to value add to their business and work with environmental groups on such an important issues as our precious fish runs in Oregon. With that said if SB 153 is not passed and the ability for longer term split season leases is lost, both fish and private property owners will suffer.

In closing I am asking for your support and those who I have contained in my email of SB 153. I would welcome any questions or feedback.

Regards

Gordon J. Larson
Berry Creek Ranch
John Day Oregon