

Hampton Susan

Subject: FW:

From: Mark Webb [<mailto:webbm@grantcounty-or.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 12:45 PM
To: Patrino Beth
Cc: Sen Thomsen
Subject:

Ms. Patrino,

I understand that you are administrator for the Senate Environmental and Natural Resource Committee. We just learned of the Committee's 1pm meeting and would appreciate if you would share the following comments from county court members with them:

Grant County is a rural, natural resource dependent county. Timber and ranching are our main industries. Access to water and flood irrigation constitute a significant factor in most successfully ranching operations here. Grant County is also home to the headwaters of the John Day River, with its undammed, critical habitat for ESA listed steelhead and salmon.

That is to say, John Day River water is critical locally for both agricultural purposes as well as for addressing ESA concerns. SB 1513, which removes the sunset provision for split season leasing, would greatly facilitate our efforts to successfully address concerns in both these areas: It could make it more profitable for irrigators to lease their water during the later, hotter part of the season, when that water might have more value for listed species than it does for agricultural purposes, and thereby provide greater incentive and flexibility for irrigators, conservation groups, and agency folk to meet ESA listed species needs when most appropriate even as the needs of our agricultural community continue to be met.

In short, split season leasing is a conservation tool that arguably benefits both irrigators and listed species in a manner that involves voluntary compliance and incentivizes healthier working relationships between the various interest groups. Alternatively, this tool enhances the ability of local people to make free enterprise decisions about how to use their property in ways that benefit area communities and ESA listed species.

We strongly encourage the Committee to support passage of SB 1513.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Webb
Grant County Judge

Boyd Britton
Grant County Commissioner