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**Testimony before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee on
SB 1513**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Chair Dingfelder, distinguished members of the committee, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Teresa Huntsinger and I am the Clean and Plentiful Water Program Director at the Oregon Environmental Council.

OEC is pleased to support SB 1513, removing the sunset on Oregon's split-season instream water leasing program. This is a successful program that benefits growers and the environment and should be allowed to continue. When the program was created, the sunset enabled the state to test the program out to see how it worked, and it has been working well. Therefore this tool should be kept in Oregon's water resources management toolbox.

The split season instream leasing program allows growers to use their water for part of the irrigation season (typically the spring), and then lease it instream during the driest part of the year when fish need it most. This practice is most commonly used on crops like hay and alfalfa that grow much more productively in the spring than they do in the hot summer months. Farmers can benefit financially by leasing that water instream in the summer, and organizations like The Freshwater Trust, Deschutes River Conservancy, and Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust will pay for instream leases that benefit fish and wildlife.

OEC recently interviewed irrigators and irrigation experts across Oregon to identify ways to advance agricultural water conservation strategies that can benefit Oregon's economy and environment. Continuing the split season leasing program is one of the recommendations identified in our new report, "Making Water Work." The program got off to a slow start, but its use is now growing quickly. Removing the sunset now will remove uncertainty for farmers and ranchers who are interested in improving streamflows without sacrificing productivity.

We urge you to pass SB 1513 this session.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.