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**Testimony before the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee on  
SB 199**

**February 11, 2012**

**Teresa Huntsinger, Clean & Healthy Rivers Program Director  
Oregon Environmental Council**

Chair Dingfelder and 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 a statewide nonprofit organization that was founded more than 40 years ago. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges today and for future generations.

OEC is pleased to support SB 199, removing the sunset on Oregon's split-season instream water leasing program. We do so in collaboration with other members of the conservation community, and with water users alike, as reflected in a joint letter submitted to the committee. This group of organizations, which sometimes find themselves at cross-purposes, has been meeting for several weeks to find common ground on policies regarding water conservation, water supply management, and water quality. We identified SB 199 as a high priority, low hanging fruit bill that we would all like to see passed this session.

Split season instream leasing is an example of the kind of tool Oregon needs to manage our water resources today and in the future. It works within the state water code and the rules of prior appropriation, and provides greater flexibility to get water where it's needed, when it's needed. This voluntary tool enables water users to be compensated for leaving water instream during the time of the year when fish need it most, while putting their water to use for irrigation or other uses the rest of the year.

Last year, when I interviewed irrigators and water experts around the state to develop OEC's "Making Water Work" report on agricultural water efficiency, we identified continuing the split season leasing program as one of our key recommendations. We heard from folks in the Deschutes and Klamath basins who are putting this program to work, benefiting stream flows and farmers, and they would like to be able to continue to do that.

Split-season instream leasing should continue to be part of Oregon's toolbox for managing our precious water resources. We ask you to please support SB 199; do not let Oregon lose this valuable tool.

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