



**Date:** February 11, 2013

**To:** The Honorable Jackie Dingfelder, Chair  
The Honorable Alan Olsen, Vice-Chair

**Presented by:** Chrysten Lambert, Director Water Transactions  
Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust

**Re:** Senate Bill 199

The Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust (KBRT) offers the following comments on Senate Bill 199 – Split Season Leasing Program – Remove Sunset:

The Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust (KBRT) is a non-profit based in Klamath Falls that works to restore and conserve the quality and quantity of water in the Upper Klamath Basin in order to enhance the natural ecosystem and supply needed water for downstream needs including native fish and wildlife, agriculture, and ranching. KBRT operates a water transaction program that includes water conservation practices, instream leases and transfers, and irrigation forbearance agreements designed to encourage the adoption of sustainable land and water management practices.

Over the last decade, KBRT has serviced more than 15,000 acres of ranch lands, assisting landowners on a voluntary basis in converting from flood irrigation to dryland or reduced irrigation programs. Some ranches participate on a temporary basis and others permanently. This work has results in an average of 40,000 acre-feet of water being left instream each year, helping to achieve water balance in the Klamath to assure sufficient water is available for both ecological and agricultural needs.

In many rural communities in our state, identifying opportunities to meet the triple bottom line of ecologic restoration, economic growth, and social stabilization is essential to the long-term viability of the communities. KBRT believes that the Split Season Leasing Program is a highly effective program for attaining this goal. In the Klamath Basin, split season management of water rights allow landowners to use a portion of their water rights during the early summer when the water is most valuable for agriculture, and then leave their remaining water rights instream during the late summer period when water rights are most valuable for ecologic protection. This balanced approach to water management can prevent the need to “call” water rights (thereby shutting down production on farms) while still protecting endangered fish populations and improving water quality.

Unfortunately, the ability for KBRT and our partnering landowners to utilize split season leasing has been limited by the sunset provisions attached to previous authorizations of the program. Much of the Klamath is irrigated by wild flood irrigation, which normally has limited discharge monitoring since pumps and other regulatory devices are not used. In order to meet the monitoring needs of a split season lease, a significant capital investment is required in monitoring of water applications on these lands, and that investment is not warranted if the program is likely to sunset.

Additionally, when landowners convert their ranches to split season management, they often need to make additional changes to their operations related to rotational grazing, additional haying operations, altering herd sizes and/or grazing locations, and adjusting the annual timing of their operations. Most of the landowners that KBRT serves are reluctant to make those adjustments if the program is at risk of sunset, however their interest in participation is high if the program is made permanent.

KBRT strongly supports removing the sunset on the Split Season Leasing Program to allow our community to find a long-term balance between our economic and ecologic needs. The challenges that we face regarding water allocation in the Klamath necessitate a robust tool box of programs to assist landowners in transitioning to sustainable operations that can support these important rural communities while still protecting the natural resources of our state. Split season leasing is one of the most important of these tools.

Respectfully,



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