



February 11, 2013

Jackie Dingfelder, Chair, Alan Olsen, Vice-chair,  
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
**Re: Senate Bill 199, Split Season Instream Leasing**

Chair Dingfelder and Members of the Committee,

Please support Senate Bill 199 (SB199). SB 199 proposes to remove the 2014 sunset on Oregon's split season instream leasing program. This important program represents one of Oregon's best opportunities to achieve the goals of our newly adopted Integrated Water Resources Strategy of meeting both instream and out of stream water needs today and into the future.

The split season instream leasing program was created in 2001 with broad bipartisan support. Split season leases are a 100% voluntary tool that allow water right holders to use their water on their land for part of the irrigation season and dedicate some of their water instream late in the season when it matters most for fish and ecosystems.

The program is administered on the ground by trusted local watermasters who have intimate knowledge of river and diversion systems. Watermasters with Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) oversight formally review proposed leases for injury and will only approve a lease if they are confident it will not result in injury to other water users. The program also allows watermasters and OWRD staff in Salem to cancel or modify already-approved leases if injury does occur.

As legislation goes, SB 199 should be a simple sunset removal. Unfortunately, water is at once an emotional and legally technical issue which means even the simplest of water legislation can become mired in misunderstanding, mistrust, and contention. Our hope is to rise above that and do the right thing for Oregon.

In your consideration of SB 199, please know that the only agenda behind SB 199 is keeping a voluntary tool in the landowners' and the state's toolbox as we begin the challenge of implementing the Oregon Integrated Water Resources Strategy. Thank you for consideration.

In earnest,

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