

Union County Cattlemen
61931 Cottonwood Rd.
La Grande, OR 97850
April 12, 2013

Senate Environment and Natural Resource Committee
900 Court St. NE Rm 347
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Oregon Senate Bill SB 217

Chair Dingfelder and Committee Members:

Union County Cattlemen oppose SB 217. This bill will add to the cost of doing business in Oregon. The state budget concerns are already slowing economic progress and this bill does not promote jobs or add to the economic viability of rural Oregon. This bill will have a harmful effect on the agriculture small businesses in Oregon who will bear most of the burden.

A water right is a property right, it has value that is tied to land and we do not see how in Oregon it is appropriate to place a fee on a property right. A property can be taxed, but a fee cannot be attached to the property, because the property owner manages the property and SB 217 proposes fee intended for use by OWRD which has no role in the property management. Once the water right is granted, OWRD is no longer involved in the activity of using the water for the purposes intended. The counties hire water masters who manage the distribution of surface water but they do not manage any part of the property. A water master does not distribute well water or manage the water at each and every house well in Oregon and OWRD does not have the authority to manage it either. The bill is unclear if a fee will also be charged for all instream water rights.

We are opposed to SB 217. We do need a better economy, more jobs, and this bill will harm small businesses and will not improve our current situation.

We urge a no vote on this bill.

Sincerely,

Union County Cattlemen members

Dennis Murchison, President
Jason Beck, Vice-President
Pat Larson, Secretary