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**Grant Soil and Water Conservation District**

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April 15, 2013

State Senator Jackie Dingfelder  
900 Court St. NE, S-407  
Salem, OR 97301

**Subject: Senate Bill 217**

Dear Senator Dingfelder:

The Board of Directors of the Grant Soil and Water Conservation District (District) is writing to voice our strong opposition to the proposed Senate Bill 217 and would request that this correspondence be made part of the official testimonial record regarding the subject.

As set forth in ORS 568.225 Policy, the District has been authorized by the Oregon Legislative Assembly to conserve, protect, and develop the renewable natural resources of the state for the benefit of its citizens, while protecting the local tax base. Working within the frame work of this legislative mandate, the District has developed a diverse and state recognized watershed improvement program which includes extensive water right administration experience. Lead by a locally elected Board comprised of private landowners and land managers, the District provides consolidated representation to its constituents regarding natural resource conservation opportunities and issues.

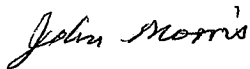
Therefore, based on the following justifications the District strongly urges the Oregon Legislature to oppose Senate Bill 217.

- Proposed fees would go directly to the Oregon Water Resources Department and would not be subject to legislature inputs. Oregon Water Resources Department has a long track record with the District of failing to follow existing water right laws concerning water right administration and transfer processes. Strategically disregarding laws for the benefit the Department does not provide for confidence that they will administer and utilize the revenue of this proposed fee program responsibly.
- Nothing is received for payment of the proposed fee, therefore it should be considered a tax and not qualify for establishment through a legislative act.

- **State Water Rights are attached to a property and establishment of a fee billing process would require a significant administrative system that would consume a large portion of the additional planned revenue. The Department could also charge a registration fee for updating existing water rights to the current property owner which would further burden water right holders.**
- **Essential water uses are directly positive to all residents of Oregon, consequently water right management should be shared across the population that receives these benefits. Domestic water supplies, industrial water supplies, navigation, agriculture irrigation, stock water, fish and wildlife habitats, and hydropower production are examples of direct water use benefits that reduce power and food costs, supply clean reliable municipal water sources, and protect aquatic environments for recreation and aesthetics.**
- **Legally established and maintained water rights are attached to the property for which they serve and adding any restriction without due process or compensation would be consider a taking of private property.**
- **The majority of effected water rights would impact agricultural producers, that due to commodity based marketing of their products, do not possess the means to mitigate this additional expense onto consumers.**

**Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.**

**Sincerely,**



**John Morris, Treasurer  
Grant Soil and Water Conservation District**

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| <p><b>Cc: OR Sen. Bill Hansell<br/>OR Sen. Mark Hass<br/>OR Sen. Alan Bates<br/>OR Sen. Alan Olsen<br/>OR Sen. Ted Ferrioli<br/>Committee Adm. Beth Reiley<br/>OR Rep. Brad Witt<br/>OR Rep. Sal Esquivel<br/>OR Rep. Caddy McKeown</b></p> | <p><b>OR Rep. Jeff Reardon<br/>OR Rep. Jim Thompson<br/>OR Rep. Ben Unger<br/>OR Rep. Wayne Krieger<br/>OR Rep. Brian Clem<br/>OR Rep. Gail Whitsett<br/>OR Rep. John Huffman<br/>OR Rep. Cliff Bentz</b></p> |
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