



May 2, 2013

To: Brad Witt, Chair, Members of the Committee  
House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

Re: **Senate Bill 199-A, Split Season Instream Leasing**

Chair Witt and Members of the Committee,

Please support Senate Bill 199-A. SB 199-A enjoys broad bipartisan support, having passed the Senate with 28 Aye votes and 2 abstentions. The bill extends the 2014 sunset on Oregon's split season instream leasing program by ten years to give the program more time to grow before making a decision whether to make the program permanent.

The split-season instream leasing 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.

Created in 2001 with broad support across the water user and conservation spectrum, participation in the split season instream leasing program is 100% voluntary. It allows water right holders to use 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. This solution provides flow for fish without sacrificing agricultural viability.

The program is administered on the ground by trusted local watermasters. OWRD watermasters formally review proposed leases and can only approve a lease if it will not result in injury to other water users. The program also allows OWRD to cancel or modify already-approved leases if unforeseen injury does occur. However, in the history of the program, careful review of leases up front has lead to zero complaints of injury in the field.

Voting yes on SB 199-A will keep an important voluntary tool in the landowners' and the state's toolbox as we begin the challenge of implementing Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy. Thank you for your consideration.

In earnest,

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