

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
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Support for SB 1529 with Amendment

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) supports SB 1529 with amendment because we believe in creative solutions that accelerate sustainable practices and enhance the long-term conservation and management of water.

Nationwide, landscape irrigation accounts for nearly one-third of all residential water use, totaling nearly 9 billion gallons per day. A 500 square-foot lawn can use more than 18,000 gallons of water per year. And in dry areas, some experts estimate that as much as 50 percent of water used for irrigation is wasted due to evaporation, wind, or runoff caused by inefficient methods and systems. Taken together, these statistics show that lawns offer great potential for water savings, regardless of geography or season.

OEC agrees that owners of lawns, gardens and landscaped areas within a planned community should be empowered to make ecologically sound choices that make both financial and common sense to them.

Indeed, owners should be permitted to make this conservation-oriented choice whether there is a drought emergency or not. For this reason, we recommend removing language in SB 1529 Section 1(5)(a-c) that ties the unenforceability of irrigation requirements to a declared drought or ordinance calling for water conservation. The removal of this clause would bring this bill in agreement with HB 4090, which allows unit owners to limit watering at any time, regardless of drought status.

The conservation benefits of the choice to abstain from irrigating a lawn, garden or other landscaped area—at any time—will cascade beyond the local level and ultimately support Oregon's shared economy and durability.

By proactively removing legal barriers to sustainable water use, residents of Oregon can conserve water, save money and ensure our state and economy are better prepared in the face of climate change. Certainly this is worth the cost of a few golden lawns.