



**Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon on SB 1529**  
**House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness**  
By: Brian Posewitz, Staff Attorney

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Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a nonprofit river conservation group dedicated to protecting and restoring natural flows in Oregon's rivers and streams.

WaterWatch supports Senate Bill 1529 because it will help promote water conservation and thereby reduce the need to take water from Oregon's rivers and streams.

We would have preferred a broader bill – one applying to all types of homeowners associations and to times other than officially declared droughts. However, this bill is a step in the right direction and will help set the stage for discussions in the interim about more comprehensive water conservation strategies.

Scientists expect Oregon to face more frequent droughts like the ones this past summer, with consequences including fish dying and important water uses being shut off. Water conservation therefore is increasingly important. “Outdoor water use accounts for almost half the water used by the American home, and thus provides the greatest single opportunity for conserving.” ([Oregon Water Resources Department Website](#).) Thus, citizens in planned developments who want to conserve water by not watering their lawns should be encouraged, not stymied by the rules of their HOAs.

We respect the rights of property owners to make agreements about how they want their neighborhoods to look. However, we believe there should be exceptions, especially where, as here, there are greater societal interests at stake and times may have changed since the agreements were made.

Although the amount of water conserved under SB 1529 is likely to be small relative to total water use in Oregon, this bill is still worth passing. Every little bit helps, and the bill will contribute to creating a culture of conservation in Oregon. The response to any criticism that the bill does not involve much water should be more effort to conserve in other areas, not less effort here.

Thank you for considering our comments.

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