



## OREGON CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB

1821 SE ANKENY ST • PORTLAND, OR 97214  
PHONE (503) 238-0442 • FAX (503) 238-6281  
OREGON.CHAPTER@SIERRACLUB.ORG  
WWW.OREGON.SIERRACLUB.ORG

To: Members of the Senate Rules Committee  
From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club  
Date: February 25, 2016  
RE: Senate Bill 1584

Chair Rosenbaum and Members of the Committee: On behalf of the more than 22,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club in Oregon, I wish to provide this written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1584. We believe that this bill will erode existing fish protection and water conservation standards in Oregon and we urge this Committee to oppose it.

SB 1584 would overturn a decision from the Oregon Court of Appeals regarding a water permit held by the City of Cottage Grove. It would also roll back existing fish review and water conservation requirements for certain municipal water permits. The bill erodes existing, workable standards for imperiled salmon and steelhead and requirements that cities implement basic, proven water conservation measures.

Specifically, SB 1584 would require these standards to apply to only the portion of municipal water rights not diverted as of December 2013, whereas existing law applies the standards to water not diverted whenever the water permits last expired. Moving the date to 2013 has created a loophole that was exploited by the City of Cottage Grove. In addition to overturning that 2014 Court of Appeals decision, SB 1584 would also undo years of compromise. Negotiations in 2005 and 2015 resulted in a process whereby fish persistence and water conservation planning standards to the portion of the permit not diverted as of June 2005, or the date that the permit expires, if later.

Furthermore, in this time of drought and a changing climate, we need more – not less – water conservation planning from Oregon’s cities, and SB 1584 would severely undercut that planning. Water management and conservation plans are important tools for cities to assess water supply issues and develop programs to implement basic, proven water conservation measures that help ensure responsible, sustainable use of the state’s water resources.

In sum, SB 1584 would make significant and controversial changes to existing water law and it should be opposed on its merits. In addition, having this bill come up for its first hearing today at the end of a

short session and with very little notice, the type of public process that such changes to Oregon should demand is completely lacking.

For all of these reasons, we urge the Committee to vote no on this controversial bill. Thank you very much for considering my comments and please do not hesitate to contact me if I may be of further assistance to the committee.