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March 8, 2017

Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

RE: SB 865

Committee Members:

I would like to express my support for SB 865. I have been able to work with OWRC as they have crafted this bill. During the process, I was able to enlist the help of our Hood River County Community Development Director, John Roberts in review of the various aspects of this bill. I believe that the bill before you will resolve communication issues between irrigation districts and planning professionals within local governments.

I have a unique view into this issue as I have been a Hood River County Commissioner for the past 16 years and am the Manager of an irrigation district. In Hood River County, we work collaboratively and already function in the manner that SB 865 describes. In the event of a subdivision or partition, special districts are notified and given the opportunity to comment on the land use change proposed. This notification and opportunity to comment provides our district with the ability to review our infrastructure and water rights in relation to the proposed subdivision or partition and prevent any potential conflicts that might arise as a result of said land use change. Many special districts have easements, rights of way, and infrastructure which are essential to providing important and valuable services to properties and property owners. Providing an opportunity to review how a land use decision could affect both the district and the property owners avoids costly conflicts down the road. This bill does not provide veto authority to a district but instead ensures effective communication between government entities.

For irrigation districts, this communication is essential to managing water rights. As urbanization occurs within district boundaries, it is imperative that water rights are properly managed to meet the requirements of the state and to ensure that water is applied appropriately to any given property and to safeguard our water resources.

Please give careful consideration to this important issue. A system of notification can and does work well in some areas of the state and we should work to ensure that there is a uniform standard across the state.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Les Perkins", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Les Perkins  
General Manager