



• 1985 Country Club Road, Hood River, OR 97031 Phone (541)-386-3115 Fax (541)-386-9103 www.fidhr.org •

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March 8, 2017

Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

RE: SB 866

Committee Members:

I would like to express my support for SB 866. The issue of storm water discharge into the infrastructure of a special district is extremely important. I have dealt with this issue both as a County Commissioner in Hood River County and as the Manager of Farmers Irrigation District.

Managing water resources is an important aspect of the economy and the environment in our state. Many irrigation districts have infrastructure that was designed and built a hundred years ago or more. As the population of the state has grown, population density has changed the way storm water is managed. In urban areas, it is often handled by sewer districts but in rural areas, the responsibility is not as clear. Often, development around irrigation infrastructure leads to changing drainage patterns and leads to intentional or unintentional discharge into irrigation infrastructure. Irrigation systems are designed to handle a certain maximum flow and any increases can lead to infrastructure failure that can threaten private property, district property, and the health of our streams. Additionally, storm water often carries non-point source pollution that can affect the water quality within an irrigation system. Increasingly, our growers are required to test their water to meet international certification standards. Pollution from storm water can create water quality issues that can put these certifications at risk.

Another area of concern that is often overlooked is the fact that storm water entering an irrigation system is not water that a district has a water right for. Irrigation districts must measure and report water use to the state every year and unpermitted water can create complications for districts.

I strongly encourage you to support SB 866 to help create clarity for all parties regarding the management of storm water in the state of Oregon.

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