

# **Rogue River Valley Irrigation District**

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February 23, 2018

Joint Ways and Means Capital Construction Subcommittee  
Co-Chair Senator Fred Girod  
Co-Chair Representative Paul Holvey 900 Court  
St. NE Salem, OR 97301

**Re: SB 5702 - Written Testimony February 23, 2017 Subcommittee Meeting**

Co-Chair Girod, Co-Chair Holvey and Members of the Subcommittee

My name is Larry Martin. I am a farmer from the Rogue Valley, near Central Point, Oregon, where I produce grassfed beef on 80 acres of irrigated land. I also serve on the Rogue River Valley Irrigation District (RRVID) Board of Directors.

I have travelled here today from Southern Oregon to speak to you about a critically important water conservation project that would help implement many years of local, state, and federal planning in the Rogue Basin. We are here to request that you make an investment of \$1,895,000 in order to leverage the \$4,005,922 investment from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation as well as significant local investment. These state funds will allow us to convert a portion of our water delivery infrastructure from a leaky canal to a sealed pipe, resulting in water conservation that will produce enhanced irrigation efficiencies and enhanced instream flows. This in turn will generate substantial economic and environmental benefits for our Southern Oregon community.

I'd like to start with a brief background on RRVID and the economic value that irrigated agriculture creates for the Rogue Valley economy.

## **Economic Value of Irrigated Agriculture to the Rogue Valley**

RRVID provides irrigation water to approximately 9,000 acres, serving 751 individual landowners in the Rogue Valley. Irrigated agriculture accounts for approximately \$64,000,000 in economic value to Jackson County, Oregon economy every year. RRVID delivers water to a wide range of agricultural operations producing many crops ranging from orchards that provide fruit for Harry and David, which is one of the major employers in our area, to my much smaller cattle operation. Our growers also produce wine grapes, and organic vegetables for our local food network as well as a variety of other crops. Irrigation water is the real lifeblood of our region's agricultural economy. Without it we would look and be a much different community.

## **Project Overview**

RRVID's delivery system was first constructed about a century ago and underwent its last major renovation around the mid-1950s. Ours is a gravity flow system, meaning that we do not have the ability to deliver pressurized water, which would allow for higher efficiency on-farm irrigation systems. Many of the flumes and other irrigation infrastructure in the project area are the same age as me, and need to be retired.

RRVID is seeking to pipe 3.3 miles of open irrigation canal with 48-inch diameter high-density polyethylene pipe, which would provide pressurized water to patrons of RRVID along that stretch of canal. If RRVID is successful in obtaining \$5,925,813 for the total project cost then the patrons of RRVID will be able to convert approximately 615 acres from flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation that will eliminate tail water and prevent associated pollutants. The \$1,895,000 that we are asking for today will greatly improve conservation and replace aging infrastructure as well as creating many environmental benefits. A unique aspect of the Bradshaw Drop Project is the opportunity to capture 100 feet of elevation drop and generate pressure to enable patrons to convert from inefficient flood irrigation methods to sprinklers without having to set up pumping systems. We are partnering with the Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, Farmers Conservation Alliance, and Natural Resource Conservation Service to prepare for the next steps.

## **Project Benefits**

The Bradshaw Drop piping project will generate significant benefits for Southern Oregon in the form of increased short- and long-term economic development, water and energy conservation, water quality improvements, and enhanced flows in Little Butte Creek (a tributary to the Rogue River), which has been recognized by the National Marine Fisheries Service in its 2012 Biological Opinion as one of the most important spawning and rearing streams for Southern Oregon Northern California Coast Coho, listed under the Endangered Species Act. This streamflow augmentation will help achieve habitat goals set forth in the Rogue Project Biological Opinion (BiOp) and promote the recovery of this species.

This project will also mark a significant step forward in the realization of nearly 20 years of planning for the WISE Project (Water for Irrigation, Stream and Economy). The WISE Project is a local, state, and federal collaboration to create a stable, long-term water supply system for the Rogue Valley based on improved water management, conservation, and reuse. The WISE Project has enjoyed support from multiple Oregon Governors, state agencies, federal agencies, and the Oregon congressional delegation.

## **Widespread Community and State Support**

In addition to participating in the collaborative efforts behind the WISE Project, RRVID has actively sought out support for the Bradshaw Drop piping project. This is evidenced by a substantial and impressive list of organizations that have provided letters in support of the District's funding requests. These supporters range from local municipal governments to businesses such as Naumes, Inc. to conservation organizations such as Trout Unlimited, The Freshwater Trust, and Rogue Basin Partnership. We also are supported by 1000 Friends of Oregon as well as farm organizations like Jackson County Farm Bureau and Jackson County Stockmen's Association. Attached to my testimony is a full list of the organizations and entities that have gone on the record in support of this project.

## RRVID's Funding Request

To summarize, we are before you today to request that you invest \$1,895,000 in the economy and environment of Southern Oregon. This would be a very wise investment of the state's funds that will result in tremendous return on investment, from both an economic and environmental perspective. We hope you will share our view regarding the importance and value of this investment.

We thank you for your time and attention today. We would be happy to take any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Martin".

Larry Martin  
Farmer and RRVID Board Member