

Watts Remy

From: Flying T Ranch <cattle@flyingtsalers.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 27, 2019 10:12 PM
To: SENR Exhibits
Subject: Senate Bill 791---Susan Topham

Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Susan Topham and I am writing in support of Senate Bill 791. I have lived my entire 30 years of life on my family's cattle ranch in the Sprague River Valley. Our ranch depends on having water to grow our hay crop and pasture for our cattle. With water our ranch is also a sanctuary for wildlife. Over 200 species of birds and other wildlife are located on our ranch along with our cattle. Five years ago, I got a taste of how quickly that could change. That was when our surface water was shut off for the first time. I was the one walking around in our dried up, decimated fields finding dead chicks and fish of all kinds of species that had naively assumed that their wetland would not dry up. I was the one that had to go out and check our cows as their pastures dried up and their feed withered. Often, I could hardly see the cows when I went out to check on them because of all the tears in my eyes. Tears not only for our cattle, but all of the wildlife, the scenery, and the land itself.

The years have gone by since then and we haven't been able to use any surface irrigation since. The wildlife that was supported on that land have died or found other homes. We cut the cow herd back. The tears don't flow anymore like they used to. I have come to accept that the raping of half of our ranch has been complete and the wildlife and wetlands are gone forever.

I am writing today to try to keep the other half of our ranch from becoming a wasteland as well. Half of our ranch is irrigated from a well. Unfortunately, the wells which provide irrigation water and livestock drinking water in the Sprague River Valley are being threatened by a whim of the Oregon Water Resources Department. No hard science has shown that ground water wells are affecting creeks and rivers in our valley. All that Senate Bill 791 does is to hold OWRD somewhat accountable, and makes sure that if someone is put out of business by OWRD that it only happens where there is actual interference. OWRD should support this. Right now, we are considered guilty until we can hire lawyers and prove that we are innocent. This is not the America that I am willing to believe in! You are the ones who will decide whether or not the remainder of my family's cattle ranch continues on as a verdant paradise for cattle and wildlife. You will decide the fate of the Sprague River Valley. What you choose to do will significantly affect me. Eventually it will affect everyone else in this state as well. We are simply the testing grounds for out of control bureaucracy.

Senate Bill 791 is absolutely vital to us. Please vote for it and stand up for real science and integrity in government!

Thank You,

Susan Topham

Flying T Ranch

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