

## Snake River Sugar Company (a cooperative)

### Contacts:

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### **HB 2403**

Malheur County Sugar Beet Truck Length Amendment

Before the

Joint Transportation Committee

May 1, 2019

This amendment will conform Oregon rule with Federal law, to allow the Oregon sugar beet farmers to have economic parity with the Idaho growers, by reducing the number of trucks needed to haul their beets to the processing plants in Idaho. Snake River Sugar Company is a cooperative owned by the sugar beet farmers in Malheur County and the sugar beet farmers just across the river in Idaho.

We have worked with the professionals at ODOT's Motor Carrier Transportation Division and Highway Division, and both the Oregon and Washington, DC offices of the Federal Highway Administration for 2 years, to assure that the proposed change would increase efficiency, reduce truck traffic, reduce trucking costs in a manner consistent with all Oregon and Federal safety and road maintenance standards. The effort benefited by extensive engineering studies by the Idaho Dept. of Transportation, shared with ODOT and FHWA engineers. These trucks have been operating safely in Idaho since 2003.

Our focus was to address the specific needs of the Malheur sugar beet growers to transport beets to processing plants in Idaho. Thus the Federal amendment, and now the conforming amendment before this Committee, is limited:

- to the carriage of sugar beets
- on a total of 55 miles of specifically mapped roads in the Vale, Ontario, Nyssa area
- allowing a trailer length of up to 82 feet 8 inches
- non-Interstate roads

Upon implementation, this will result in 1,830 fewer truck trips annually on these Oregon roads.

All Oregon and Idaho state and Federal elected officials of the impacted areas in Oregon and Idaho supported the Federal amendment – Representatives Greg Walden and Mike Simpson; US Senators Ron Wyden, Jeff Merkley, Jim Risch and Mike Crapo; Oregon Senator Cliff Bentz and Representative Lynn Findley. All worked together to gain enactment, in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, in February, 2019.

HB 2403, now before the Joint Transportation Committee would amend ORS 818.210 by adding section (13) to bring Oregon truck length rule precisely into compliance with the Federal law, as amended and limited as described above.

Upon enactment, once the season begins this fall, Oregon sugar beet farmers will be able to be as operationally and cost efficient as their Idaho counterparts in bringing their beets to the processing plants.

We are grateful for two years of careful and knowledgeable review and guidance by ODOT, from the initial contacts with the Secretary's office, through the many sessions with ODOT Motor Carrier and Highway Divisions' regulatory staff and engineers, their engagement with FHWA, which made consensual, bi-partisan support for and enactment of the Federal amendment possible. Since then, the genuine interest by ODOT's Motor Carrier Division and Government Affairs in expeditiously conforming Oregon law and rule, and in providing guidance as to the process for doing so, has been indispensable.