

# HERMISTON IRRIGATION DISTRICT



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April 3, 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Chair Ken Helm,  
Vice-Chair Mark Owens,  
Vice-Chair Annessa Hartman,  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Testimony in Support of HB 3124,  
Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package**

Dear Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair Hartman, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Hermiston Irrigation District (HID) to express strong support for House Bill 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package proposed by Representative Helm and Representative Owens. I particularly want to highlight the importance of provisions that provide match funding for irrigation districts to unlock federal dollars for irrigation modernization projects and help districts like ours be more resilient to drought and water scarcity.

HID has been in operation since 1908 and delivers water to approximately 1,285 irrigators and 10,000 acres of land that grow alfalfa, corn, potatoes, melons, pasture grass and Hermiston's famous watermelons. Much of the infrastructure that the district relies on consists of open earthen ditches and concrete pipelines that are over 115 years old. HID's existing irrigation system is outdated and inefficient resulting in operational inefficiencies, water loss, reduced crop yields, and expensive operations and maintenance costs.

Oregon has faced several years of severe droughts, including some of the worst on record, and the detrimental impacts are being felt throughout the state, including in our region. HID is located in the Umatilla Basin in the northeast part of the state. The Umatilla Basin is located in a semiarid climate with eolian sand and gravelly alluvium soils. The modernization projects that the district is pursuing will allow for increased efficiency, decreased seepage losses, elimination of flood irrigation, improved safety, sustainability, and enhanced streamflows.

In order to implement large-scale, multi-benefit projects, fulfill Agricultural Water Management and Conservation Plan goals, and be more resilient to drought, many districts, including ours, have utilized federal programs such as NRCS's Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations or Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART for support. These programs play a key role in planning, designing, and implementing projects, but still require some portion of project funding to come from non-federal sources. Our district is committed to modernizing our system, but we require state funding to meet match requirements for implementing identified projects in 2023-2025 and beyond. Bill 3124 contains the match funding districts need to fully utilize and leverage the infrastructure dollars that the federal government has made available.

I urge you to support the important funding components in HB 3124 and ensure that state match funding for irrigation modernization projects remains a part of the final bill. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

  
Annette Kirkpatrick  
District Manager