

Submitter: Ti Jeffries
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB427

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to support Senate Bill 427 to safeguard streamflows in water right transfers.

I've been following the climate trends in Oregon, as well as the entire western states. The future will be a huge challenge, at best. I recently read an article citing research that scientifically predicts our climate will, like the trend in much of the continent, be hotter and drier. After a number of years of increasing temperatures and larger, hotter wildfires, Oregon will need all the natural, historical rainwater it can possibly receive and store.

The water in our streams is our state's lifeblood. It grows our salmon and our food, and it fuels our families. It ties us to our neighbors upstream and downstream. It belongs to all of us.

Yet for far too long, an outdated loophole has allowed the Oregon Water Resources Department to approve applications for water right transfers without adequate consideration of whether the change will harm streamflows. This is something that should have been rectified long ago. Lower water levels in a stream can hurt fish, impair water quality, and decrease scenic and recreation values. I believe it also contributes to lower soil humidity and resistance to fire, that could make the difference in how well forests can survive.

Senate Bill 427 is a beginning, crucial step in a new focus on safeguarding our streams—and the fish, water quality, and scenic values they support—by ensuring that voluntary water right changes won't further diminish streamflows. This narrow, but necessary, fix closes a dangerous loophole and brings modern environmental values into Oregon's outdated water right transfer review process.

Thank you for reading and considering my thoughts.