



February 26, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for Senate Bill 427, Relating to Water Transfers

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash and other members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than 55,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club Oregon, we ask that you vote in favor of Senate Bill 427. It is essential we protect the quality of our groundwater to maintain the health of our rivers and streams. Senate Bill 427 will do that by requiring no diminishment of streamflow when an application is submitted for a transfer of water rights. This step has been critically missing from our current water rights transfer process.

Many of Oregon's streams are over-allocated in summer, and groundwater aquifers statewide show signs of overuse. With 97% of Oregon's stream miles lacking dedicated instream water rights, there is no safeguard against harmful water right changes even if they could dewater fish-bearing streams. With approximately 250 water right change applications submitted annually and increasing as fewer new water rights are issued, Oregon must act now to protect its natural water supplies. SB 427 offers a crucial, efficient solution by closing a loophole that allows water right changes to bypass environmental safeguards. As modifying existing water rights becomes the primary way to meet new demands, legislators have a key opportunity to pass SB 427 and protect Oregon's streams, ecosystems, and communities. By establishing a "no diminishment of streamflow" standard in water right change reviews, this targeted reform will help preserve vital flows for fish, wildlife, water quality, recreation, and cultural values.

Maintaining the quality of the water is essential to the health of aquatic life and is critical to protecting the scenic, cultural, and recreational values of our rivers and streams. We urge you to protect Oregon's waterways by supporting SB 427.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Bowes, Policy Strategist

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Bowes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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