

Submitter: Marie Bowers
On Behalf Of: Farmer
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1153

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

SB 1153 is a solution in search of a problem.

It threatens Oregon's ability to manage water efficiently and responsibly through the use of water rights transfers at a time when new water rights are not available.

A water right transfer is required whenever a water right holder seeks a change in point of diversion, point of appropriation, type of use, place of use, or any combination of these.

It ignores existing public review requirements currently required through the Oregon Water Resource Department's (OWRD) water rights transfer process. By adding more, superfluous layers of bureaucratic review, the bill would have a chilling effect on the efficient use of water throughout our state through the threat of litigation from activist third parties.

Additionally, OWRD is ill-equipped to handle additional work when they are already backlogged and seeking to increase water user fees by 135%!

Overall:

Limits Flexibility: By imposing vague and broad environmental assessments, this bill would severely restrict water users' ability to adapt to changing conditions.

Litigation Risk: SB 1153 opens the door to years-long delays and costly litigation from third parties, without improving environmental protections.

Redundant and Unnecessary: SB 1153 adds new, duplicative standards to a process already governed by strict anti-injury and anti-enlargement rules.

No Stakeholder Input: The water user community has had no meaningful engagement in this ill-conceived policy proposal.

Please oppose this bill!