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Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, Senator Girod, Senator Prozanski, Senator Taylor:

****RE: Opposition to SB 1153 – Water Transfer Restrictions****

I am writing this voice my strong opposition to SB1153. As a cattle rancher and water user in Southern Coos and Northern Curry County, and a Certified Water Rights Examiner offering water right consulting services throughout Oregon, I can't express the importance of water right transfers to water users and businesses enough. SB1153 will significantly slow the transfer process.

Currently, I have several clients waiting over a year to complete transfers that are critical to their operations, in one case this is after the client doubled the transfer application costs by opting for the "expedited" Reimbursement Authority program. These long processing times create uncertainty for water users whether the transfer will be approved, or the actual cost and current need of the transfer by the time it is approved.

SB1153 adds two new vague criteria to the transfer evaluation regarding instream habitat for certain species and water quality impairments. These are redundant, as many transfers are already subjected to "mitigation" by ODFW, where ODFW acquires a portion of the water right in form of an instream water right. Transfers are often limited by the common existing instream water rights, which ODFW is continually acquiring. There are existing laws that allow agencies to address water quality concerns.

SB 1153 moves us in the wrong direction. We need policies that support responsible use and flexibility.

Sincerely,

Marc J. Van Camp, PE, CWRE
Proud Member, Oregon Farm Bureau
Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau President