



March 22, 2017

House Energy and Environment Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2705 and HB 2706

Chair Helm, Vice Chair Johnson, members of the Committee,

I am John O'Keeffe, President of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association. Thank you for this opportunity to share my views on this important issue.

I am here to speak in opposition to HB2705 and HB 2706.

First HB 2705, this bill is unnecessary, currently the state has means to require measurement of water if the local watermaster deems it necessary. The state does not have the staffing necessary to analyze the data that is being collected now. Additional data for the sake of data does not solve any problem.

Local conditions vary widely across the state. In Hood River the water district delivers pressurized filtered water to the edge of the field. In Lake county individual irrigators apply water from free running streams to the naturally contoured native meadows. Let's talk about these natural systems for a minute. Water enters the floodplain during the high spring flows from multiple diversions, sometimes from more than one stream, blending as it crosses multiple ownership boundaries. Modifying these systems to measure water applied by each appropriator would greatly negatively affect the wetland qualities of these systems.

There would be no benefit to measuring these flows, currently the landowners are doing the best they can to mimic the natural processes that created these systems. They are doing so legally within their water right.

If problems arise the local watermaster knows the local situation and has the tools to address those problems. Ensuring that the local watermasters have what they need to do their job would be a much more cost effective and realistic approach than requiring measuring devices to be placed at all points of diversion throughout the state.

Measuring water creates no more water, irrigators in these communities have been managing water with the tools that they have had available for years, a state-wide mandate to install costly burdensome devices will not solve any problem, but will quite likely create some. Any effort to measure water needs to be thoughtful, appropriator vetted, targeted, and designed to apply to the conditions in that system.

HB 2706 the Oregon Cattlemen's Association oppose this bill. Ranchers are already overly burdened with government fees and regulation, the cash and non-cash costs of government regulation of production agriculture are significant. Agricultural producers operate on narrow margins, sometimes on negative margins, as producers of commodities they do not get to pass on increased costs.

This bill will build in additional bureaucracy into the OWRD. That in and of itself will need support funding.

Agriculture is important to everyone in Oregon, everyone eats, it is certainly appropriate to fund the OWRD out of the general fund.

Sincerely,

John O'Keeffe
President
Oregon Cattlemen's Association