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March 22, 2017

House Energy and Environment Committee

Oppose HB 2705, 2706, 2707

Dear Committee Members:

The water bills being considered today will harm the agriculture small businesses across Oregon by burdening people with new costs to grow crops that contribute to their livelihood and the Oregon economy.

HB 2705 requires measuring devices to be installed on recent water rights, which assumes the devices will not cause a monetary burden on any appropriator. The bill if it intends to be reasonable, must address measuring devices reasonably. This was considered some years ago and the legislature discovered the cost was out of reach for many in agriculture. Putting a measuring device on a water right can cost \$1000 plus each and every year. The devices do not last long, need to be fixed or replaced often, and the committee needs to rethink the ideas in this bill. Each and every water right likely does not need to be measured when a major diversion would suffice to give a reasonable estimate of the quantity of water being used.

HB 2706 places a management fee on the water rights, but fails to address what the water right holder receives in return. The bill offers numerous ideas of where the fees will be applied within OWRD, but it is insufficient to explain how more money in OWRD will benefit the State of Oregon. More dollars to the agency adds on to the financial burdens of the agriculture community with water rights, which impairs their ability to produce crops in a cost effective manner.

HB 2707 appropriates money from General Fund to Water Resources Department for ground water studies and investigations, or other ground water data gathering and analysis, conducted in cooperation with United States Geological Survey in priority basins determined by department. The general fund appropriation is left too broad to use for "other ground water data gathering and analysis". How will it be shared with USGS? The bill left a blank to fill in which indicates it is not ready for a hearing. In the current budgeting situation Oregon is facing the specifics on spending needs to be presented in a clear manner and consideration given to what Oregon needs rather than what departments may or may not want.

I work with the agriculture producers and urge this Committee to avoid punishing them with financial burdens such as the ones in these bills. Oppose these bills and move forward with work that will benefit all citizens of Oregon.

Patricia Larson