

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING HB 2705 and HB 2706

I HAVE BEEN TOLD A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS. I HOPE SOME OF THESE PICTURES SHOW THE KINDS OF IRRIGATION SYSTEMS THESE HOUSE BILLS ARE IMPACTING.

WE BELONG TO AN IRRIGATION DISTRICT THAT HAS BEEN IN PLACE SINCE THE 1800'S. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE IRRIGATION DISTRICT IS TO PROVIDE WATER TO AGRICULTURAL USERS. IT ALSO SERVES AS A METHOD OF DIRECTING RUNOFF OUT OF THE GRANDE RONDE VALLEY.

THE ONGOING MAINTENANCE OF THE CANAL SYSTEM IS TAKEN CARE OF BY THE WATER RIGHTS HOLDERS. THIS INCLUDES ONGOING CLEARING OF DEBRIS FROM THE SCREENS LOCATED WHERE THE WATER GOES UNDER ROADWAYS OR THE RAILROAD TRACKS. IT ALSO INCLUDES ANNUAL WORK PARTIES OF IRRIGATION RIGHTS HOLDERS REMOVING BRUSH AND SMALL TREES ENCROACHING ON THE WATER CANALS.

PLACING UNREASONABLE DEMANDS UPON THOSE WITH WATER RIGHTS COULD RESULT IN PEOPLE LEAVING THE WATER AUTHORITY. THIS WOULD NOT MEAN THAT THE SYSTEM OF WATER CANALS COULD BE ABANDONED. ONE AREA OF DEVERSION WAS BLOCKED OFF SEVERAL YEARS AGO. IT HAS HAD A SERIOUS IMPACT UPON FLOODING AT THAT END OF THE TOWN RESULTING IN THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS OF FOOD DAMAGE AND ONGOING STUDIES AND EFFORTS TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DEAL WITH THE FLOODING PROBLEMS.

ABOUT 10 YEARS AGO THERE WAS AN EFFORT AT PLACING A METHOD OF MEASURING THE WATER AT THE POINT OF DIVERSION FROM THE RIVER. IT NEVER WORKED AND EVANTUALLY WAS REMOVED.

ON TO THE PICTURES:

PICTURES ONE AND TWO ARE OF PUMPS USED BY WATER RIGHTS HOLDERS TO REMOVE WATER FROM THE IRRIGATION CANAL

PICTURE 3 IS OF THE HEADGATE OFF THE PRIMARY CANAL THAT DISTRIBUTES WATER TO AGRICULTURAL PROPERTY ALONG FOOTHILL ROAD

PICTURE 4 IS OF RUNOFF WATER IN THE CANAL ON 3/21/17

REQUIRING PEOPLE WITH WATER RIGHTS TO PAY FEES THAT WILL PRIMARILY BE EATEN UP BY THE PEOPLE WHO ENFORCE THE COLLECTION OF THOSE FEES MAKES NO SENSE.

REQUIRING PEOPLE TO INSTALL EXPENSIVE DEVICES TO MONITOR THE WATER FLOW WHEN THE RESULTS ARE NOT GOING TO BE ACCURATE ANYWAY MAKES NO SENSE.

RECOMMENDED ACTION TO ADDRESS CONCERNS REGARDING UTILIZATION OF WATER RESOURCES IN THE STATE:

1. THE BURDEN OF SHOWING ADEQUATE WATER EXISTS SHOULD FALL ON THOSE REQUESTING NEW WATER RIGHTS.
2. MUNICIPALITIES SHOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE WATER TO GROUPS OUTSIDE THE AREA SERVED BY THE MUNICIPALITY. CURRENTLY CITIES ARE SELLING WATER TO DEVELOPERS. IN THE CASE OF THE SADDLE BUTTE WIND DEVELOPMENTS, THE WATER RESOURCES PREDICTED TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION MAY EXCEED 30 MILLION GALLONS IN ADDITION TO THE ONGOING USE FROM EXEMPT WELLS. THEY AVOID ANY TRACKING OF THIS USE BY OBTAINING WATER FROM MUNICIPALITIES WHICH REQUIRE NO AUTHORIZATION ACCORDING TO A LETTER FROM JERRY SAUTER, OWRD, AUGUST 24, 2012.
3. ORS 545(I)(f) SHOULD BE AMENDED TO REMOVE THE EXEMPTION FROM OWRD PERMITS AND GROUND WATER RIGHT CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW USERS OF UP TO 5,000 GALLONS PER DAY.
4. NEW USERS SHOULD BE THE ONES PAYING FOR FIELD, TECHNICAL, SCIENTIFIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO GROUNDWATER INVESTIGATIONS, NOT PEOPLE WHO CURRENTLY HAVE WATER RIGHTS BASED UPON THE FACT THAT WATER IS AND WAS AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT THE ISSUANCE OF A WATER RIGHT.

Irene Gilbert
2310 Adams Ave.
La Grande, Oregon 97850
Phone: 541-963-8160P



