

Mike Carrier
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Dear Mike;

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Headwaters to Ocean Initiative (H2O). We appreciate the Governor's interest in addressing Oregon's current and future water needs and your work on SB 1069.

Unfortunately, H2O is not in a form that Oregon Farm Bureau can support. The document is overly weighted to increasing staff numbers at state agencies with little direction on what these positions will be doing. We were hoping to see this program build on the success of the Healthy Streams Partnership, Oregon Plan, and Measure 66, which focused less on growing state government and more on partnership building and getting tools and resources to good projects on-the-ground.

We would support an initiative that encouraged local/regional planning around both water quantity and quality needs and created programs to give people on-the-ground the tools and resources to address the water needs in their communities. This program should complement and in some cases add resources to the Oregon Plan, SB 1010's Agriculture Water Quality Plans, SB 1069's Agriculture & Community Water Act grant program, Oregon Water Supply Inventory and other water programs.

Additionally, Oregon will need to address water supply needs for both an increasing population and a prosperous agriculture industry. H2O needs to do more to get conservation, reuse and storage projects implemented. Farm Bureau would like a more aggressive capital construction component added. Oregon is lagging behind other western states in securing water supplies for the future. If this is truly a climate change initiative, water supply should be the leading element.

Oregon Farm Bureau cannot support any public funds to be used to purchase water rights to be converted to in-stream use. This practice would have significant negative impacts on a basin's irrigation use. Under current law, in-stream rights are protected under their "paper right" or what is listed on the water certificate, not by what has been historically used. This paper right is often much more than what has been used. This water is then prohibited to be used by junior users in the systems, who historically have been using part of it. Additionally, in-stream transfers out of irrigation districts can impact the remaining users in a system by removing the part of the flow needed to service the entire district. Finally, there are concerns that creating a government fund for in-stream rights will inflate the price and market for water. Farm Bureau requests funds for in-stream transfers are removed from future versions of H2O.

Oregon Farm Bureau members look forward to working with you and others in drafting a H2O document that empowers Oregonians to tackle our water challenges.

Sincerely,
Katie Fast
Director of Government Affairs
Oregon Farm Bureau