



Senator Bill Hansell

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hansell Brings Home Water Funding For State and Basin

Salem, OR – The East Oregonian Editorial Board on January 30th, tasked Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena) to “Show us the water.” They stated:

Increasing the flow of Columbia River water into the Umatilla Basin has been a priority for area legislators for a long while. But while past efforts have been consumed with the laborious task of laying groundwork, Hansell and the rest of the local contingent seem to have the water issue square in their sights for completion this session. ... Hansell said securing the water would bring “mind-boggling” benefits to the area. And anything with that kind of impact on the mind is worth putting at the top of the priority list.*

On July 3, Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena) came through on their Editorial Board Request. The Oregon Legislature’s Joint Committee on Capital Construction for Ways and Means filed their recommendation on which projects will be funded through bonding by the state. Included on the list are project funding for statewide Water Projects.

“From the beginning of my time in the Legislature, this has been a top priority of mine,” Hansell said. “Nothing comes close to the prospects for what additional, sustainable, water development means for our local region’s economy. We were in a position to do something this session, partially because of the hard work and efforts of my predecessor Sen. Dave Nelson and Rep. Bob Jensen in particular.”

The funding package approved is a statewide package that provides \$20 million in lottery backed grant and loan funding and \$30 million in General Obligation loan funding for water development and efficiency projects throughout the State of Oregon.

“We sincerely appreciate Senator Hansell’s leadership to encourage the bi-partisan efforts of the members of the Oregon Legislature to produce a water supply and planning package this year. The legislature has worked so hard on our regions’ behalf and on behalf of the State of Oregon to provide a pathway for sensible, multi-beneficial water development efforts to move forward,” stated Bob Levy, owner of Windy River and Secretary of the Northeast Oregon Water Association.

“When we saw the letter co-signed by Senator Hansell and Senator Michael Dembrow (D-District 23, NE Portland) requesting the funding package we thought we might have a chance,” stated Craig Reeder, Chairman of NOWA. “We are also so lucky to have Senator Hansell on our side, who worked very hard on both side of the isle and with leadership in both Chambers of the Legislature to keep the full OWRD funding package alive. They deserve full credit for accomplishing a very, very heavy lift.”

In addition to working with the Governor’s Office to craft the letter requesting the State provide feasibility and implementation dollars for water projects, Hansell also strongly supported Senate Bill 266, during the 2013 session, which implements a policy and provides funding to establish “place-based” water planning in the State of Oregon.

“Taken together, the OWRD budget and Senate Bill 266 give the department and the state the means to promote all three facets of wise water management and development: 1) planning, 2) funding for technical and feasibility studies, and 3) implementation funding for those projects that are ready to move forward,” stated J.R. Cook, Director of NOWA. “Thank you to Senator Hansell and our regional representatives for ensuring that OWRD has the tools it needs to manage water resources effectively.”

“We have been able to do something this session I don’t believe has happened before,” Hansell stated. “There is great bi-partisan interest in sustainable water development to address both immediate and long-term needs throughout this state, including needs in my District. I believe we will be able to take momentous steps forward with these funds and the water related policy bills that were passed this session. This program as it moves forward, is the result of long-term collaborative efforts by individuals from a variety of stakeholders including tribal governments, irrigators, conservation groups, local governments, and state agencies.”

“With \$50 million worth of GO Bond and Lottery Bond funding for water related projects, the state, and especially the Umatilla Basin, is in a position to significantly prosper,” Hansell said. “The newspaper tasked me at the start of the session to bring home the water in their January article. I am pleased I was able to help deliver it.”

Senator Hansell’s Committee proposal letter is attached to this Press Release for reference and additional information.

*A link to East Oregonian’s full article can be found here:

<http://www.eastoregonian.com/eo/editorials/20150130/our-view-advice-for-legislators-as-session-kicks-off>

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