



OREGON SENATE REPUBLICAN CAUCUS

May 24, 2024

Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable Tina Kotek
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street NE, Suite 254
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Governor Kotek,

Oregon Senate Republicans are writing to express our deep concern about the nomination of Ivan Gall as the Director of the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD). After thorough consideration, we have significant reservations about his ability to effectively lead this crucial agency. Our concerns are rooted in his track record, which we believe demonstrates a lack of the necessary vision and expertise required to address the complex water management challenges facing our state. Mr. Gall is an inexperienced leader that will likely perpetuate the status quo of a paralyzed inefficient agency that routinely misses its own performance measures and fails to meet its core mission of co-equally managing water for out-of-stream and in-stream uses.

During Mr. Gall's time with the OWRD, we have observed a series of troubling issues that highlight his lack of leadership and strategic vision. He lacks experience with budgeting and leading the agency through difficult decisions that he'll be facing — fee increases, staff lay-offs, efficiency improvements. He also lacks legislative/policy experience as well as legal/water law background that would be helpful in navigating the large amount of litigation WRD is involved in. Finally, and most importantly, he lacks experience developing collaborative solutions.

Mr. Gall has been a staunch defender of the department's proposed updates to the groundwater allocation process and seems unwilling to explore alternative approaches or more basin specific approach, which has been requested multiple times by those engaged in the process.

Mismanagement at the OWRD has led to numerous specific instances where water resource conflicts and agricultural turmoil has inflicted damage on the livelihoods¹ of many Oregonians who depend on stable and reliable water for their homes, farms, and businesses.

The purposeful confusion between surface and groundwater appropriations is not a minor error but a critical failure that underscores a lack of understanding of sustainable water management. This issue has exacerbated the challenges particularly felt in rural areas

¹ [Race to the bottom: How big business took over Oregon's first protected aquifer - OPB](#)

where water is scarce. In fact, farmers, families, and entire communities are at risk of long-term economic and social impacts due to the comprehensive shut-off of regional water sources and blanket² rule changes that will no doubt have long lasting consequences in our state.

Most recently, Mr. Gall was the supervisor for the watermasters in Southern Oregon who lacked³ the training to know they couldn't take gifts of weed or drink alcohol in a state vehicle. This not only points to an inability to set a good example for the staff he oversees, but poor judgement entirely.

Effective leadership of the OWRD requires a director who not only understands the complexities of water management but also has a proven ability to navigate these challenges and change the culture from within the department in a manner that protects and enhances the welfare of all Oregonians. Unfortunately, Mr. Gall's tenure has not provided the confidence that he possesses these essential qualities.

Considering these concerns, we urge you to reconsider the nomination of Ivan Gall as the Director of the Oregon Water Resources Department. We believe it is imperative to appoint a leader with a demonstrated commitment to sustainable water management, a track record of effective problem-solving, and a clear vision for the future that aligns with the needs and values of our diverse communities.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We are hopeful that you will take our concerns into consideration and seek a candidate who will provide the leadership the OWRD urgently needs.

Respectfully,



Daniel Bonham
Senate Republican Leader, District 26



Fred Girod
State Senator, District 9



David Brock Smith
State Senator, District 1



Kim Thatcher
State Senator, District 11



Dick Anderson
State Senator, District 5



Suzanne Weber
State Senator, District 16

² [Agencies, cities convene to discuss water conservation in Central Oregon | Environment | bendbulletin.com](#)

³ [Oregon watermaster probe finds pot gifts, alcohol violation | Local&State | bendbulletin.com](#)



Dennis Linthicum
State Senator, District 28



Bill Hansell
State Senator, District 29



Lynn Findley
State Senator, District 30



Art Robinson
State Senator, District 2
