



**WaterWatch of Oregon**  
**Protecting Natural Flows In Oregon Rivers**

**HB 2331-2**

**Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon**  
by Kimberley Priestley

**House Committee on Natural Resources**  
**April 4, 2019**

**WaterWatch opposes HB 2331-2**

This bill would limit the authority of the Oregon Water Resources Department to enforce against well standards related to well repair, construction, alteration, abandonment or alteration beyond three years. The -2's would also set up a Task Force on well construction enforcement activities.

Properly constructed, maintained and abandoned wells are critical to ensuring against health hazards, ensuring public safety and protecting the environment. The Department's authority to protect these public values should not be limited and/or restricted in any way.

While we recognize there might be a need to improve the Department's well construction program, restricting state authority to enforce would not address the risk improperly constructed, maintained, altered or abandoned wells pose to Oregonians. Rather than pass a law that would restrict the ability of the state to enforce well standards beyond three years, which could put water users and the environment at risk, the Legislature should instead turn its attention to additional funding for the Oregon Water Resources Department to do this, and other, important groundwater work.

The -2 amendments also call for a Task Force on well construction enforcement activities. A Task Force might be a good place to develop a workable path forward; however, as currently constructed it fails to include the many stakeholders who could be affected by improperly constructed or abandoned wells, including but not limited to water right holders (municipal, agriculture, etc), conservation groups, public health experts and tribes.

Conclusion: We do not believe that HB 2331-2 provides a safe or responsible path forward. The state needs the ability to ensure that wells meet state standards, regardless of how much time has passed since the filing of the well log. A task force might be a good path forward, but the current make-up would need to be expanded as noted.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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