

SB 1562 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On General Government and Emergency Preparedness

Action Date: 02/12/20

Action: Do pass and refer to Ways and Means by prior reference.

Vote: 5-0-0-0

Yeas: 5 - Boquist, Girod, Golden, Monnes Anderson, Riley

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: C. Ross, Counsel

Meeting Dates: 2/12

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) to administer a program to study existing information, make recommendations, and create a long-range improvement plan in furtherance of removal of Groundwater Management Area designation in specified areas of the Lower Umatilla River Basin. Requires program to include facilitation, improved coordination, the formation of an interagency task force, and staffing by ODA. Specifies composition of task force and ODA's duties. Sunsets task force January 2, 2030. Appropriates \$250,000 General Fund dollars to ODA. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- History of Groundwater Management Area designation
- Progress toward re-designation, critical to the region
- Previous attempt to obtain funding

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The Lower Umatilla Basin is one of three designated Groundwater Management Areas in Oregon. The designation was made in 1990 by the state Department of Environmental Quality and the state Department of Agriculture due to nitrate-nitrogen concentrations above 7 milligrams per liter in the region. Oregon's Groundwater Quality Protection Act requires the designation because high nitrate concentrations in drinking water are linked to serious health concerns. After an area is designated, a local groundwater management committee is formed to work with state agencies to develop a plan to reduce area contamination.

Senate Bill 1562 requires the Oregon Department of Agriculture to convene, facilitate, and staff an interagency task force to achieve removal of the Groundwater Management Area designation from specified parts of the Lower Umatilla River Basin.