

HB 3242 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Water

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 3/18, 4/1

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Water Resources Department (WRD), in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, groundwater advisory committee, and other parties, to develop and publish report identifying groundwater basins in the state; summarizing the known status of groundwater characteristics within each basin; identifying groundwater issues in each basin; and developing recommendations for determining which basins most need detailed studies and management, and methods to report regularly to the Legislative Assembly on groundwater matters. Appropriates \$250,000 to WRD, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, for this purpose. Directs WRD to report to a committee of 82nd Legislative Assembly on the department's estimated costs and timing of conducting groundwater basin studies and providing regular reports on groundwater characteristics, and recommendations for prioritizing water management in the major hydrological basins. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

FISCAL: Impact statement issued.

REVENUE: No revenue impact.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Need for more information on state groundwater basins
- Importance of identifying overallocated basins
- Cost of conducting groundwater studies

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Water resources differ greatly across the 18 river basins and nine major geologic areas recognized in Oregon. Differences include the interactions between surface water and groundwater, and the recharge patterns of aquifers, which are made of different materials and structured based on the geology of the basin location. Differences also include precipitation patterns, such as the amount and type of precipitation, and other geographic features like mountains and valleys. Currently, state agencies monitor groundwater level trends and groundwater quality in certain areas using tools like observation wells and basin investigations or assessments.

House Bill 3242 would appropriate \$250,000 to the Oregon Water Resources Department to conduct groundwater studies in priority basins within the state and report back to the legislature on findings and recommendations.