

## HB 2257 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

### House Committee On Water

---

**Action Date:** 03/30/21

**Action:** Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means by prior reference.  
(Printed A-Eng.)

**Vote:** 8-0-0-0

**Yeas:** 8 - Breese-Iverson, Helm, Leif, Owens, Reardon, Reynolds, Wilde, Witt

**Fiscal:** Fiscal impact issued

**Revenue:** No revenue impact

**Prepared By:** Allison Daniel, LPRO Analyst

**Meeting Dates:** 3/4, 3/30

---

#### WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates \$500,000 from General Fund to Water Resources Department, for biennium beginning July 1, 2021, for purposes of: facilitating enrollment of lands in Harney Basin in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), funding position for hydrologist, and measuring ground water levels in Harney Basin to assess effectiveness of ground water management programs. Specifies role of hydrologist to: support implementation of contracts entered into under CREP, assist implementation of other projects intended to reduce ground water use in Harney Basin, assess effectiveness of participation in CREP and of other strategies for reducing ground water use, collect data on ground water levels in Harney Basin, monitor and estimate ground water use in Harney Basin, and support actions taken by District 10 watermaster. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

#### ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Need for more information on Harney Basin ground water resources
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program match rate
- Potential for expanding program beyond the Harney Basin

#### EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Changes “Conservation Reserve Program” to “Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.”

#### BACKGROUND:

According to the United States Geological Survey's Harney Basin Groundwater Study, demand for ground water in the Harney Basin is increasing. Water uses include domestic, irrigated agriculture, livestock, and wildlife needs. Local and statewide stakeholders have identified a need to reduce ground water use in the Harney Basin through either regulatory or voluntary mechanisms in order to achieve stable ground water levels.

The Food Security Act of 1985 established the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as a voluntary federal program, overseen by the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. The CRP provides an annual rental payment to private landowners in exchange for the removal of environmentally sensitive land from agricultural production and the planting of species that will improve environmental quality. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is an extension of the CRP that provides an annual rental payment for voluntary non-use of ground water.

House Bill 2257 A would appropriate \$500,000 to Water Resource Department, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2021, for the purposes of facilitating enrollment of lands in the Harney Basin in the CREP, funding a hydrologist to support implementation of the program, and measuring ground water levels in the Harney Basin.