



Support HB 2018 – Assessment of Ground Water Resources

While there are many issues we debate in the water world, this diverse group of water stakeholders has consistently rallied around a common goal: the need for stronger state investment in studying groundwater so that we can effectively manage that resource for all Oregonians.

The lack of comprehensive study of our groundwater resources in most basins in Oregon is one of the most urgent natural resource issues facing the state. Many communities and groundwater-dependent ecosystems throughout the state are facing problems associated with groundwater over-allocation. Many more communities simply do not have the information to determine whether they will be facing a groundwater crisis in the near future, or if the state is managing groundwater sustainably. These risks will increase without sufficient information about Oregon’s groundwater availability.

The single most effective solution to promote sustainable management of our aquifers is the study and development of modern groundwater studies throughout the state. In 2017, the Oregon Water Resources Commission updated the State’s Integrated Water Resources Strategy, which asserts that “conducting groundwater investigations is a priority for the state.” Continuing to develop the science, data, and understanding of Oregon’s groundwater is fundamental to effective resource management and allows the state and stakeholders to proactively develop solutions to avoid water resource crises.

HB 2018 will move the state towards this goal. The bill directs the collection and analysis of foundational groundwater data that will allow the state to understand if a basin is overallocated, develop groundwater budgets to help manage the resource, and prioritize future groundwater investigations. The investment in robust data and information about groundwater is critical to effective management of the resource. The ability for the Oregon Water Resources Department to collect foundational data and develop groundwater budgets in advance of basin studies is critical to understanding groundwater resources and how they interact with surface water in each basin, and has both economic and ecological benefits. Preventing overallocation of groundwater directly benefits groundwater-dependent ecosystems, agricultural water supplies, domestic and municipal drinking water supplies, industrial water supplies, outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, and many other public and private uses of the public’s water. However, groundwater investigations take considerable time and resources to complete.

Additionally, state investment has the potential to bring federal resources to bear in solving our state’s most complex groundwater issues. Investment by the state leverages federal United States Geological Survey cooperative study dollars, meaning that any investment by the state results in additional federal dollars coming to the state to help solve our complex groundwater problems.

While we appreciate the challenges before the legislature this year as you balance the budget and provide adequate resources for ongoing programs, we urge the House Water Committee to pass HB 2018 and to support increased general fund investment to fund the work required under this bill, for the benefit of all Oregonians