

Marshall Gannett
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Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Water

I am writing to express my strong support of House Bill 2018.

I am a retired Research Hydrologist and Registered Professional Geologist, and have spent most of my professional career working on groundwater science in Oregon, focusing on providing scientific understanding of groundwater resources to water users and water managers including the Oregon Water Resources Department.

House Bill 2018 is critically important to irrigators, municipalities, and individual home owners who rely on groundwater. Although the Oregon Water Resources Department basin studies provide state of the art science for understanding and managing groundwater resources, the time and effort required for these studies means that much of Oregon still remains un-studied or under studied.

This lack of state-wide understanding makes it possible for groundwater development in many areas to progress beyond the capability of the resource. The resulting declines in groundwater levels (and sometimes spring flow) can cause serious economic hardship on existing water users who may have decades-long history in agricultural communities. Furthermore, individuals newly developing groundwater resources in under-studied areas may find water is not available to support their planned uses, sometimes after considerable investment. It is also important to note that over-extraction of groundwater can negatively affect aquatic ecosystems.

House Bill 2018 provides a very common sense approach to identifying areas in Oregon where opportunities might exist for further groundwater development as well as areas where caution should be applied before expanding groundwater use. The proposed groundwater budgets that will be created for each basin will help water users and regulators know the relation between recharge to groundwater systems and current levels of extraction. The proposed effort to quantify water use will be an important part of developing basin budgets.

Knowing where there are possible issues with the balance between inflows and outflows could identify areas where the Water Resources Department might consider additional scrutiny of new groundwater applications and help prioritize research efforts. Such knowledge will also offer protection for existing groundwater users.

Although the proposed statewide groundwater budgets provide a barometer for identifying potential problem areas, detailed basin studies are still needed to fully understand the

groundwater hydrology to the point where groundwater use can be optimized without causing adverse impacts.

The proposed augmentation of the statewide water level monitoring network is also an important element in improving statewide groundwater management. Tracking groundwater levels in wells is our first line of defense in protecting aquifers, and water users, from water-level declines and the associated economic impacts.

Lastly, the creation of peer-reviewed maps and reports required by House Bill 2018 ensures that information will be available to water users as well as resource managers, ensuring that all parties involved will have a common understanding of Oregon's groundwater resources.

I strongly encourage the Committee to give House Bill 2018 full consideration.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about my testimony.

Respectfully,

Marshall Gannett
Oregon Registered Professional Geologist