

February 14, 2021

Ken Helm
Water Resources Department
725 Summer Street NE, Suite A
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support of HB 3092

Dear Chair Helm:

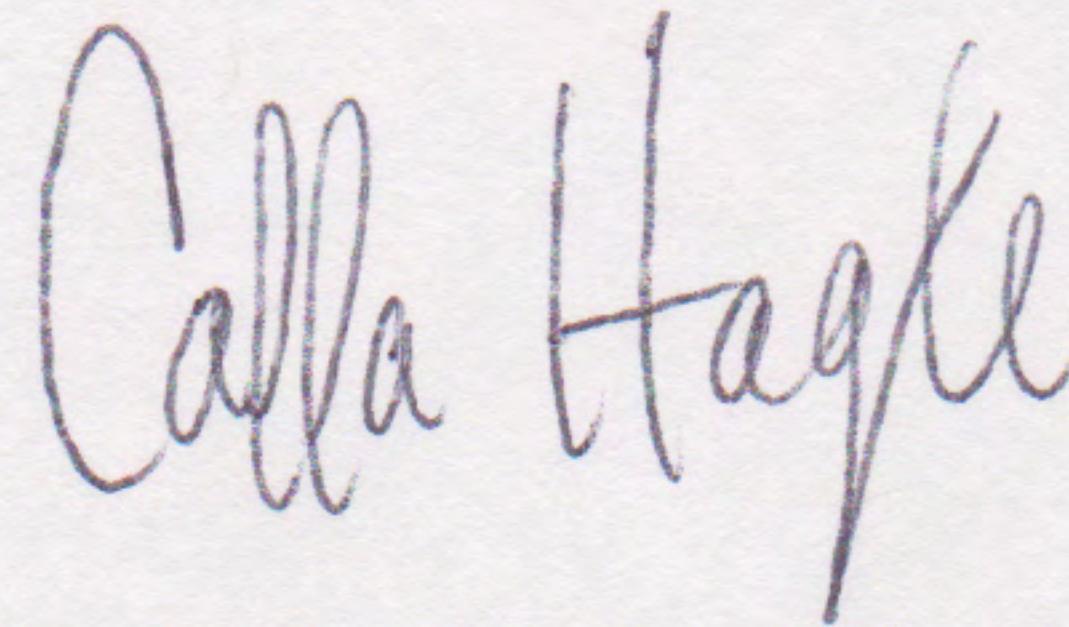
I write this letter to the Oregon Water Resources Committee as a resident of the Greater Harney Valley Groundwater Area of Concern. In my 5 years living and working in Harney County I have grown to love this place and the community that makes it feel like our home. I have been disturbed to witness losses both in quantity and quality of water for basic necessities amongst many members of this community. I have heard my neighbors voices often raised in concern about the overwhelming personal and economic stress this loss of reliable and drinkable water has had on their lives. Can you imagine for yourself how difficult life must be for those who cannot turn on a tap and receive water? Water for consumption, bathing and cleaning is a necessity we may often take for granted otherwise. Many families that have experienced these losses originally purchased their properties with a clean well test and abundant water for domestic uses. Because my family unwittingly purchased our property in an area of the Basin that is suffering a high number of domestic well declines, and the agricultural wells that have not run dry continue to pump, I expect that this same loss may affect myself and my family one day soon as well.

That is why I became a participant in the Harney County Community Based Water Planning group. Many domestic well users are also a part of the collaborative effort to do what the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) has not, to advocate for the rights of people to conserve water for the most fundamental human uses. For years this collaborative group has recognized that ground water has been overallocated for agricultural use, this caused declines in domestic wells and the availability of water for drinking and basic necessities for rural residents.

It is widely accepted that we must find ways to reduce the use of groundwater in the future. However, the immediate suffering of families with declining domestic wells requires immediate attention. OWRD issued groundwater irrigation permits far in excess of what was sustainable, now domestic well users ask for some parity in the State's consideration. The HB 3092 fund represents some of the much-needed equity for the needs of rural residents in areas that have been negatively affected by over-permitting and pumping and OWRD's general negligence in regulation of both.

We must recognize that this mitigation fund will not be the final answer, changes in allocations of water and over-use must be instituted. However, this funding will help those that have suffered prior and continuing losses until those changes take effect. In the interim, the HB 3092 fund will help residents to continue to invest and call Harney County home. In closing, I urge your yes vote on HB 3092 today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Calla Hagle".

Calla Hagle
Harney County Resident
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Burns OR 97720