

HB 3130 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Action Date: 03/02/23

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

Vote: 8-0-1-0

Yeas: 8 - Boice, Gamba, Hartman, Helm, Levy B, Marsh, McLain, Owens

Exc: 1 - Scharf

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 2/7, 3/2

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates General Fund moneys to the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to fund a staff position and allocates moneys to an entity within Harney County, jointly agreed to by OWRD and Harney County Court, for contracting with a qualified entity to advise and assist ground water users and other interested stakeholders in the Greater Harney Valley Groundwater Area of Concern with developing voluntary agreements among ground water users from the same ground water reservoir, and to assess the opportunities and limitations of using these agreements. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Aquifer voluntary agreements as potential alternatives to voluntary ground water agreements
- History of voluntary agreements in Oregon
- Over-appropriation of water in Harney Basin
- Rationale for limiting the amended measure to Harney Basin

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Removes specific advising, assisting, and assessment responsibilities from staff position funded at the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD). Allocates moneys to an entity within Harney County, jointly agreed to by OWRD and Harney County Court, for contracting with a qualified entity to advise and assist ground water users and other interested stakeholders in the Greater Harney Valley Groundwater Area of Concern with developing voluntary agreements among ground water users from the same ground water reservoir, and to assess the opportunities and limitations of using these agreements.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon's voluntary agreements law (ORS 537.745) authorizes the Water Resources Commission (Commission) to encourage, promote, and recognize voluntary agreements among ground water users from the same ground water reservoir. A voluntary agreement must comply with the intent, purposes, and requirements of the Oregon Ground Water Act, and undergo an approval process by the Commission. One of two approaches available for addressing and controlling ground water declines – the other being area designations and rulemaking – voluntary agreements have not yet been used in Oregon. Community-based water planning collaboratives report that significant uncertainties remain as to their contents, development, and implementation.

House Bill 3130 A would appropriate General Fund moneys to the Oregon Water Resources Department to fund a staff position and to allocate moneys to an entity within Harney County, jointly agreed to by OWRD and Harney

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County Court, to advise and assist local communities on voluntary ground water agreements, and to assess the opportunities and limitations of using these agreements.