

HB 2168 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

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

Prepared By: Anna Glueder, LPRO Analyst

Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 1/22, 2/3

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure requires the Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service to establish a program to provide assistance to households that rely on wells for drinking water or on septic systems for wastewater treatment and appropriates \$2.5 million from the General Fund for implementation. The measure further appropriates \$5 million each from the General Fund to the Oregon Water Resources Department and to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality for deposit into the Water Well Abandonment, Repair and Replacement Fund, and to Oregon's low-interest loan programs for residential or small business on-site septic systems respectively. The measure declares an emergency and takes effect on its passage.

Detailed Analysis

- Requires the OSU Extension Service to establish a program to provide assistance, including outreach, research, education, advice on available resources, and monitoring of wells and septic systems to households that rely on wells for drinking water or on septic systems for wastewater treatment. Requires the program to focus on areas that are declared areas of ground water concern and appropriates \$2.5 million General Fund moneys for implementation.
- Appropriates \$5 million General Fund moneys to OWRD for deposit into the Water Well Abandonment, Repair, and Replacement Fund.
- Appropriates \$5 million General Fund moneys to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality for purposes related to Oregon's low-interest loan programs for repair, replacement, upgrade, or evaluation of residential or small business on-site septic systems.
- Declares and emergency, effective on passage.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In areas not connected to a public water system, people often rely on private wells and septic systems for their drinking water and wastewater needs. Estimates for Oregonians reliant on domestic wells range between 17 to 23 percent of the state's population. The Well Abandonment, Replacement, and Repair Fund (WARRF) is administered by the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) and provides grants to reimburse homeowners for the expenses to repair or replace and abandon a qualifying well. The program was last funded during the 2024 legislative session when OWRD received \$1 million from the General Fund. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) provides a number of financial resources for homeowners who need financial assistance for septic system repairs or replacement. In 2021 DEQ's Onsite Septic Financial Aid Program received \$15 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.