

Submitter: Erin Maidlow
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB747

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water:

My name is Erin Maidlow and I am a community member, but also the director of an organization who supports farmer and producers, as well as a farmers market, in Douglas County. I am writing today to support SB 747. It is so important that we do everything we can to control the groundwater contamination in sensitive areas. Groundwater Management Areas have already been designated by the state as having dangerous levels of contaminants. Not only does this hurt the people living here, taking away their assurance of clean drinking water, but it also impacts the environment and wildlife in the area, and threatens the ability of land to remain productive. This bill has been carefully crafted to apply to farms with 200 acres or more, who likely already track their fertilizer application, and it is not an enforcement or penalty bill. This is simply to make sure ODA has the information to advise farmers on programs and best practices that would help them not only protect water quality but save money on inputs.

We know that farmers are experts on their fields and already have detailed plans for fertilizer application. This bill is to make sure that farmers have all the information they need to make decisions for their farms and ecosystems and get them better access to ODA technical assistance based on real data.

This personally impacts me because I work with several farmers who rely on clean water to manage their crops which feed our community. Douglas County is an area rich in agriculture, from ranches to vineyards to produce farms. We have excellent groundwater that farmers rely on to water crops in dry months and it is critical that it stays clean and uncontaminated. Requiring reporting of fertilizers should be a given, and not only will it protect groundwater, it will hold producers accountable for tracking inputs to their land. The overuse of nitrogen can be devastating to waterways and cause major issues as we have seen nationwide, but especially in areas like the Mississippi Delta, where "dead zones" occur due to an overgrowth of algae from too much nitrogen and phosphorus. The excess algae has blocked out sunlight and caused eutrophication, which is the asphyxiation of life. Eutrophication leads to excessive die-off of aquatic life such as our salmon, trout, and other fish that our communities rely on, especially Native American communities which are already disproportionately marginalized.

The additional requirement for producers to report their fertilizer rates and times

would not cause excessive work for producers who should, and for the most part, are already tracking these inputs to their land. SB 797 would hold us all accountable for ensuring we have clean water and soil for generations to come.

It is all of our responsibility to protect our water. This is not something that we can take lightly and it makes sense to require more reporting in sensitive areas. Please pass SB 747.

Thank you,

Erin Maidlow