



Representative Ken Helm, Co-Chair
Representative Mark Owens, Co-Chair,
Representative Sarah Finger McDonald, Vice Chair
Members of the House Agriculture, Natural Resources, Land Use and Water Committee

The Association of Oregon Counties offers this letter in **support of House Bill 2988.**

House Bill 2988 would require the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) to consult with other state agencies and interested parties (counties included) to identify and reduce the barriers that stand in the way of aquifer recharge and aquifer storage and recovery in the state. Furthermore, the bill calls on OWRD to develop technical assistance resources to support and expand those efforts as well. OWRD is expected to report back to the legislature the types of projects related to aquifer storage and recharge that support water quality, water supply needs, habitat or ecosystem needs, identify any regulatory impediments to expanding those efforts as well as any environmentally protective approaches other states are doing that could work in Oregon as well.

Water is critical. Not only to agricultural users and habitat, but also to local economies, industries and municipalities. Everyone relies on water for their daily lives and as such, ensuring Oregon has a dependable, stable, and sustainable water supply is imperative. Over the past few years, droughts and shifting climate patterns have caused water users to take many proactive steps to ensure the resource is managed to the best of their ability.

In 2024, four counties were issued an official drought declaration by the Governor. In 2023 that number was eight. In 2022, there were 17 counties and in 2021 over two-thirds of Oregon's 36 counties (26) were issued an official Drought Declaration. House Bill 2988 would allow local communities the ability to find the best ways in their basins and regions to recharge, recover, and store water in their respective aquifers for when it is needed.

AOC encourages the committee's support of House Bill 2988.

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