

Submitter: Zachary Hall

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

House Bill 3372 is a pointless overreach that threatens Oregon's water users, and you should be ashamed for pushing it. Ordering the Water Resources Department to "study" exempt water uses—stockwatering, domestic wells, small gardens—while tweaking laws to tighten control? This isn't about understanding; it's a setup to strangle rural Oregonians. Here's why it's a sham, backed by hard data.

This targets farmers and families, not waste. Oregon's exempt uses—15,000 gallons/day for homes, 5,000 for industry—are tiny. OWRD: 80% of groundwater goes to permitted irrigation, not these exemptions (2023 report). Stockwatering over 12,000 gallons at new CAFOs gets capped—fair—but your "study" hints at broader cuts. Oregon's ag sector—\$5 billion annually (ODA 2022)—relies on these wells. You're risking livelihoods for no gain.

There's no crisis to justify this. OWRD's 2022 groundwater assessment: only 3 of 18 basins are "critical"—exempt uses aren't the driver; big ag and climate are. USGS: Oregon's aquifers recharge at 20 million acre-feet yearly—exemptions use less than 1%. Your bill's a solution chasing a ghost, wasting \$300 fees and staff time when 40% of OWRD's budget already strains on existing duties (2023 fiscal report). It's a Trojan horse for regulation. Adding "commercial garden" limits—5,000 gallons combined with industrial use—shows your hand. Why study if you're already clamping down? OWRD's 2021 data: 90% of exempt wells are rural, supporting homes and small farms. You're paving the way to choke them, ignoring that 70% of Oregon's water disputes tie to permitted overuse, not exemptions (OWRD disputes log).

Rural Oregon gets crushed. Harney County—95% reliant on exempt wells (OWRD 2020)—can't afford new rules. Your report, due 2026, tees up legislation to gut these rights by 2027. Meanwhile, urban sprawl guzzles 60% more per capita (USGS 2022). Focus there, not on ranchers scraping by.

Drop this nonsense, Helm and Owens. Study real issues—overdrawn basins (15% of permits exceed limits, OWRD 2023) or infrastructure (30% leakage, EPA 2021). HB 3372 is a bureaucratic boondoggle that threatens Oregon's backbone. Kill it before it harms us.