

Submitter: Star Wood
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1154

This testimony is intended to voice opposition to SB1154 which is scheduled to be heard on 4/8/2025. The many and varying parts of this bill focus on private, state wide rural land owners – not just those in areas like Harney County. The apparent control matrix it is attempting to establish is more consistent with urban water quality issues with egregious impacts. The following are specific points I feel are relevant and merit consideration.

Nowhere in the bill do I see citizen participation from the beginning of the process. And I do not mean public hearings. I mean active ad hoc participation of taxpayers with NO political involvement or intent. What I do see is a clear path being developed for the governor to impose and interject governmental control of any area and its inhabitants through use of governmental agencies with water resources as the tool to justify that control. With little or no representation of the public and tax payers who employ ALL of these agencies.

Having lived through and experienced the Spotted Owl debacle of the 80s it is difficult to see this section of the bill (as it's written) for more than a power grab – control the water and you control the population.

This bill presents the potential for our Governor to declare the entire state a “ground water quality concern area” during drought periods. Since this bill excludes urban water sources, in that situation the regulations would apply only to those in rural areas and virtually paralyze the rural community.

Additional concern stems from development of bare land specifically written as: “A county may prohibit the development of any new residential dwelling or accessory dwelling otherwise allowed under this chapter within a ground water quality management area unless the dwelling is connected to urban water supply services under subsection (1) of this section or a community water well described in ORS 537.621 (2)(b).”

So essentially once our Governor designates an “area of concern” the relevant county has the right to cease and stop all development of private land? Unless, of course, it is a sub-division or development hooked to urban water sources? The potential affect on thousands of small, private property owners is huge and devastating. This has the potential for stopping any bare land development on parcels too small for agricultural use – which in turn increases the already

problematic shortage of available housing. And it inhibits small owners, without funds typically required to develop subdivisions, from developing bare property. One section of this bill reaches back to all property partitions done between 1949 and 1983. More details and explanation of why is warranted.

This bill also appears to require any feedlot, auction or dairy operating within a ground water management area to obtain new permitting from DEQ or Dept of Agriculture. So auction houses like those in Madras and Eugene (who sell thousands of head of livestock across the U.S. for consumption) would be forced to reapply for their permits. It doesn't take much analysis to realize the permit parameters have undoubtedly changed and the applicant would face a new set of rules.

"The Land Conservation and Development Commission may adopt rules to administer this section, including rules establishing conditions under which counties must prohibit new residential development." And the rules for governing county will be mandatory and developed by LCDC? Since when does local government have NO jurisdiction for their area?

Finally, Section 32 states that rural residents existing wells may be forced to abandon domestic wells. Who bears the cost of replacement? A group of home owners can apply for grants to establish a community water source? And where does the knowledge to successfully write the grant and develop a community source come from? And what structure is required to oversee management of the "new" community water supply?