

April 5, 2025

Senator Golden and Committee Members
Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee

RE: Support for SB 1154
Updating Oregon's Groundwater Quality Management Act

Our lack of regulating contaminants that impact our drinking water sources has become a public health issue in several parts of the state. Probably the most widely publicized and most impacted area is the domestic well situation in the Umatilla Basin. The issue has prevailed there for over 30 years, primarily unchecked. But we also have issues in Malheur, Crook, and Jackson Counties as well as within counties in the mid-Willamette Valley.

The Groundwater Quality Protection Act passed in 1989 has not been as effective as it should have been in implementation. The State of Oregon needs to re-establish the act with tools, integration among agencies and regulation to stop the worsening situation that affects domestic wells throughout our state. There are over 250,000 exempt groundwater wells and there is limited oversight for protection from contaminants affecting those wells. In some areas where pollution is worst, affected well users are often underserved populations requiring our assistance.

I strongly support updating the law to create a comprehensive approach with the agencies working in coordination to counteract the issue. There should be a lead agency, as the bill states, and the agencies can provide accountability by reporting back to the legislature on their progress. That will inform the legislature about how the agencies are carrying out the accountability to stop the contaminants so that the legislature can identify if further direction is required.

We need to implement local actions to protect public health, not just through an advisory committee, but through stronger actions from the agencies involved in overseeing groundwater quality. The goal must be to provide alternate safe drinking water for all citizens who are being impacted. It is not enough just to identify the problems, but strong action must be taken to stop the pollution and protect drinking water sources.

This is our opportunity now to make a difference, to make the laws work for Oregonians by providing effective management and taking action to protect our drinking water.

Jan Lee
Sandy, Oregon