

I would like to go on record as opposing sections 17 and 19 of SB1154, now under consideration in the legislature.

The bill as written, allows counties to prohibit new residential construction in “Groundwater Quality Management Areas” (GWMAs) unless homes are connected to public water systems, which most are not. It goes further to give the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) carte blanche authority to create rules dictating where counties MUST prohibit new structures. Worse still, it permits the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to enter onto private property in GWMAs without landowner consent to inspect subsurface sewage disposal systems — an invasive overreach with almost no checks and balances. This overreach is completely unacceptable to me as a property owner in rural Western Oregon.

Property owners in these areas are likely to see their land values plummet and their ability to build or rebuild homes taken from them. And thanks to Measure 49’s exemption for public health and safety regulations, homeowners barred from building or improving their properties will likely have no recourse for compensation.

The southern Willamette Valley is already covered by a GWMA. As such, activities such as agricultural practices, waste management, and residential uses are closely monitored, guided, and sometimes regulated to mitigate groundwater contamination. However, public education, best practices, and voluntary community involvement are emphasized to ensure long-term protection of water resources, without causing unintended consequences for property owners in GWMAs. This collaborative approach is a much preferred approach to the tops down, heavy handed methodology advocated in SB1154 Sections 17 and 19.

Instead of narrowly targeting polluters, this bill punishes homeowners and communities who had no hand in the contamination. Destroying property values, restricting land use, and denying compensation isn’t just shortsighted— it’s unjust.

I ask you not to inflict this damage on rural property owners.