

Mary Powell  
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Re: HB 3372-A 11

Chair Golden and Senate Members of the Agriculture Committee

We are interested in bills addressing exempt wells and groundwater resources. We would like to suggest an amendment to SB 3372-A

While we support allowing farmers to water a ½ acre plot and sell their produce, with the reduced allowance of water quantity, these exempt wells are not metered, monitored or regulated unless there are reported violations. If exempt well owners wish to have a commercial product their exempt wells, commercial and household should be metered separately and the water use reported. That report should be publicly available. While OWRD doesn't have the staff to monitor it, the reporting would provide a record of the place of use, amount of withdrawal, and time of withdrawal giving us a better idea of flow and recharge of groundwater and discharge to rivers.

We have over 24,000 exempt wells in the Deschutes basin and as members of the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative it is difficult to understand and plan when the state of our groundwater, especially the quantity, place of extraction, and the effect of pumping on local wells is unknown. Groundwater is an essential water source for the Deschutes River and its tributaries. It is responsible for the character of the river environment and supplies essential drinking water. Agricultural practices, Industrial, commercial and household use, effects on local wells, land use decisions, and mitigation credit determinations are all dependent on knowing the state of the groundwater resource and the best way to see where the water is, and is not, is to meter and report the state of groundwater throughout the Basin. It would be unpopular to require all exempt well users to install water meters and report their use, a commercial operator could be expected to demonstrate a beneficial use.

In fact, the exempt well water allowance is excessive and there are many examples of abuse as well as ignorance of the requirements. It would be wonderful if the House and Senate Agriculture Committees, with OWRD, would reexamine the statute and revise it in view of the change in climate and population and the need to protect the resource for all.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our concerns.  
Sincerely,  
Jim and Becky Powell