

PLEASE VOTE “NO” ON SB 1154.

SB1154 is yet another attempt to punish rural residents, farmers, and ranchers. County Watermasters have been successfully managing water resources without the need for additional government bureaucratic overreach or unnecessary regulations. DEQ and county building departments already regulate septic tanks, requiring permits to install or modify the system and responding to complaints. We do not need more regulations and definitely do not want unannounced inspections of our water and septic systems once they are approved and installed.

This proposal weakens home rule authority and forces Oregonians to comply with broad state mandates crafted by unelected administrators. It threatens local decision-making, property rights, and transparency, and jeopardizes liberty, privacy and local control. It opens the door for regulatory overreach that punishes homeowners, farmers, ranchers and rural communities.

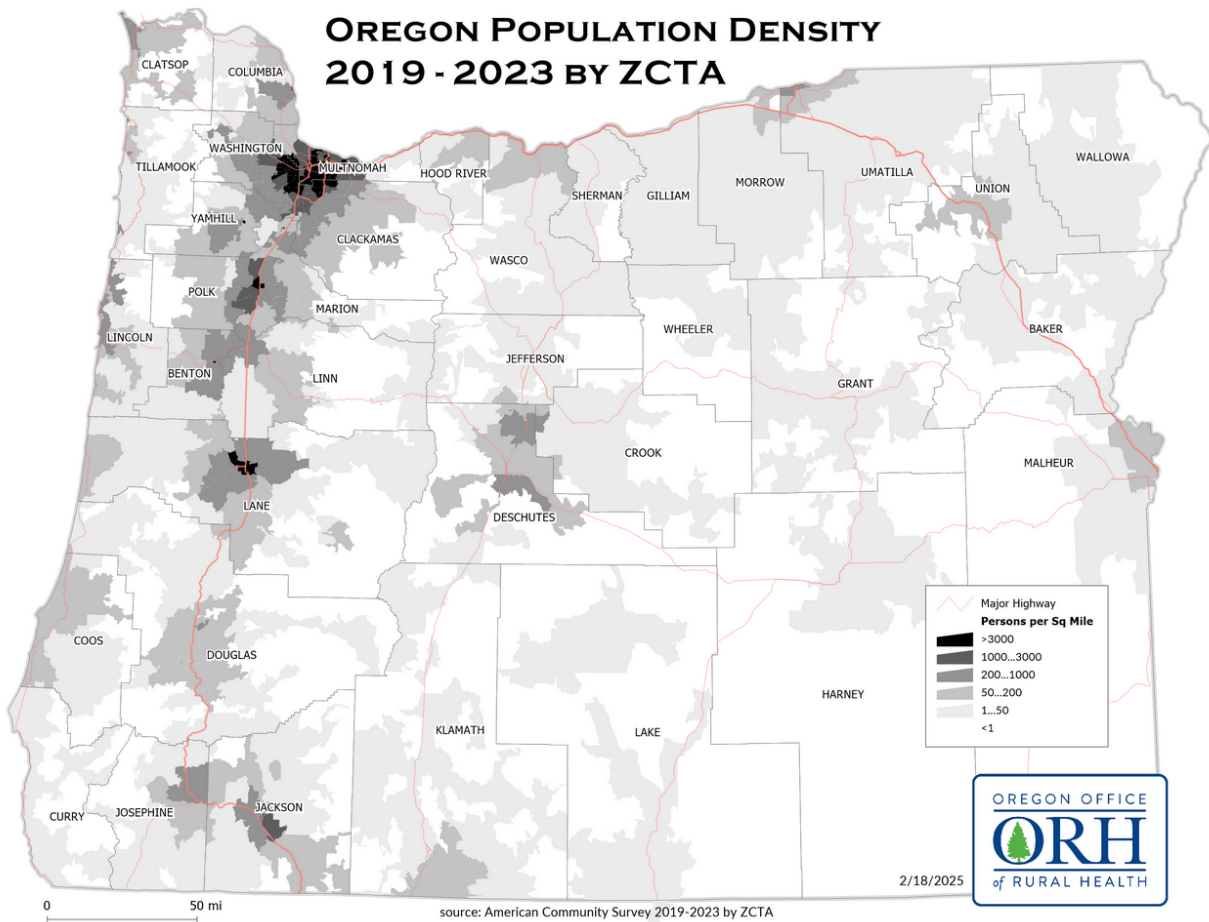
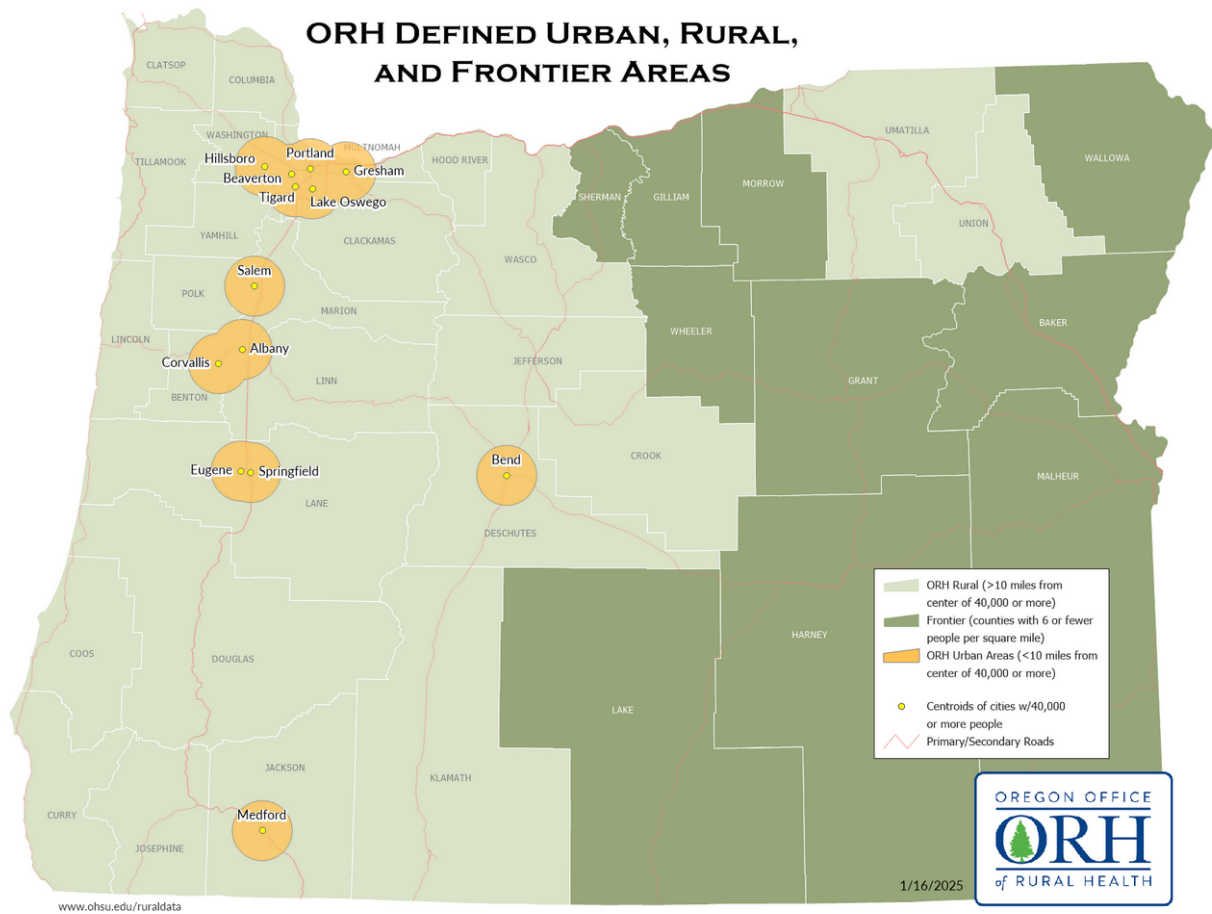
Current well owners, including those with historic water rights, have already fulfilled the requirements to access the water under their land and have spent thousands of dollars to purchase and maintain the needed equipment. Much like the air we breath, this water is part of the Earth’s life support system and allows farmers and ranchers to grow food, another component to support our survival. We have been good stewards of this resource.

In contrast, urbanization can lead to increased pollution and runoff, the creation of expanses of impervious surfaces where rainwater can’t infiltrate the ground, increasing runoff that carries pollutants to local waterways. This pollution can degrade water quality, impact drinking water safety standards, and harm aquatic ecosystems.

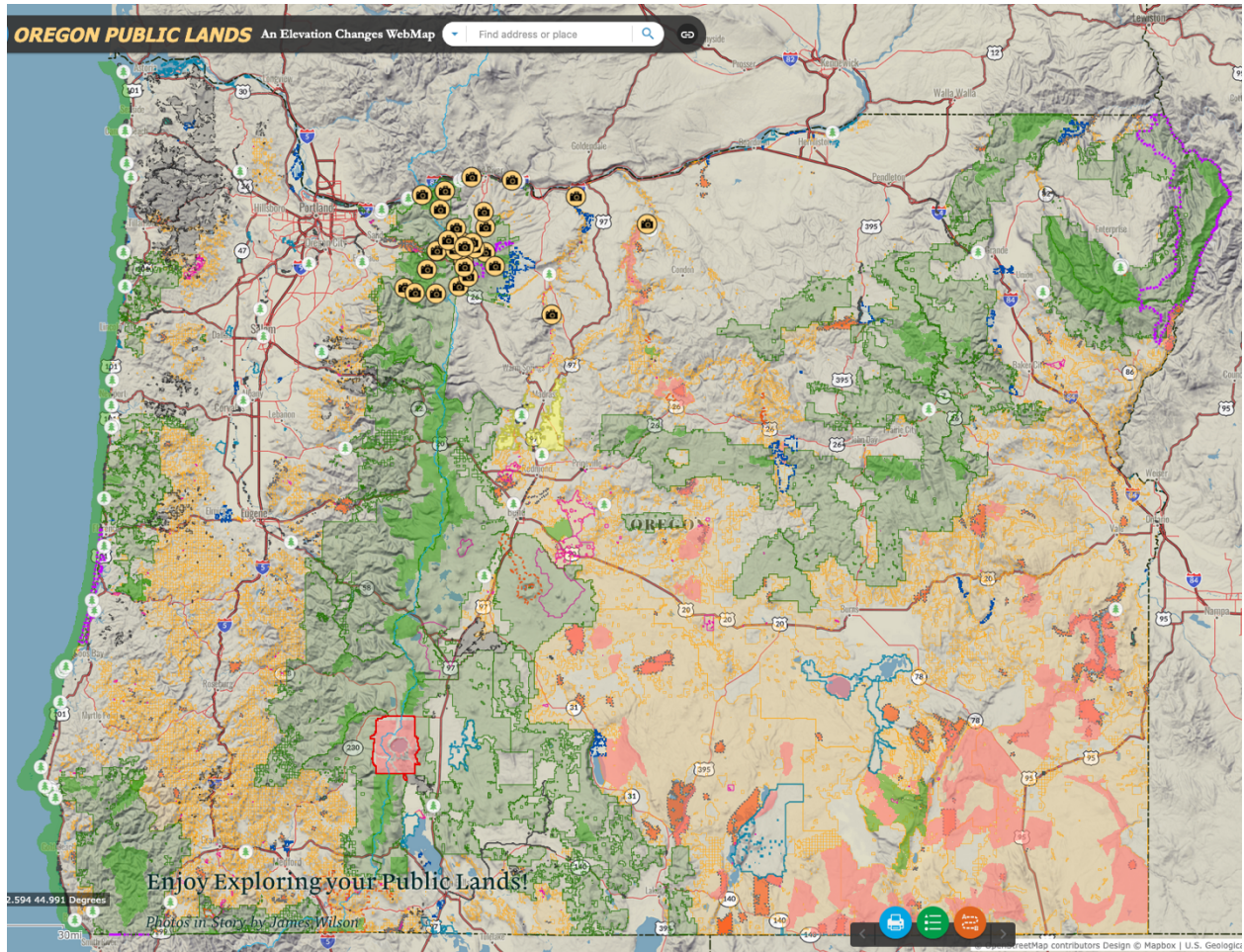
The Oregon Office of Rural Health (ORH) website provides data on the rural versus urban population distribution in Oregon. “Using 2024 Claritas data, 33% (1,403,688) of Oregon’s population lives in rural areas, 2% (97,666) in frontier, and 65% (2,772,488) in urban areas.” ORH provides the following geographic definitions:

- **Rural** as any geographic areas in Oregon ten or more miles from the centroid of a population center of 40,000 people or more.
- **Frontier** as any county with six or fewer people per square mile. ORH has identified 10 of Oregon’s 36 counties as frontier.
 - Baker
 - Gilliam
 - Grant
 - Harney
 - Lake
 - Malheur
 - Morrow
 - Sherman
 - Wallowa
 - Wheeler

ORH’s maps clearly show the urban versus rural distribution in Oregon. The economic and regulatory impact of this proposed legislation to roughly 1.5 million (35%) of Oregonians is significant, extreme and totally unnecessary.



According to the arcgis.com website, 60% of Oregon's 61.6 million acres of land is publicly held by federal, state or local governments; 53% is managed by the Federal Government. Oregon's Department of State Lands owns the beds and banks of navigable waters, including Oregon's tidally-influenced waters and territorial sea, and certain rivers and lakes.



Given the distribution of the rural population on private property in the area of public land already managed by federal, state or local government, why would the State of Oregon need to manage individual wells and septic tanks more than they already do?

Please vote NO on this bill.

Respectfully,

Vern & Elizabeth Johnson
Sisters, Oregon
3rd generation Oregonians