



VOTE YES ON SB 1154

PROTECT GROUNDWATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN OREGON

For decades, Oregon's 1989 Groundwater Quality Management Act has needed updates to ensure that the good intentions of the law are made real for Oregonians.

Take the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area: the vague language of the 1989 Groundwater Quality Management Act has hampered progress towards identifying, reducing and eliminating groundwater pollution from all sources in the area. Agency coordination and accountability have fallen short of what was needed in the basin to successfully work with local folks to address the problems. The 30 years of ineffective efforts have taken a toll on everyone involved, particularly those whose drinking water wells have been polluted.

The changes proposed in SB 1154 will prevent this from happening again, somewhere else in Oregon. This bill simply clarifies the existing statute, making explicit **four important issues:**

- 1 Oregon needs a program to catch potential problem areas before an aquifer becomes too polluted for drinking water use. SB 1154's coordinated, two-step approach provides just that.** The Groundwater Quality Concern Area designation enables proactive efforts by the agencies and local stakeholders when possible non-point source contamination is detected in groundwater. Agencies will be responsible for including outreach and education to well owners, industries, municipalities and agricultural producers. If those efforts are unsuccessful in curbing or eliminating groundwater pollution and contaminant levels pose a danger to human health, a Groundwater Quality Management Area can be declared. Once that happens, agencies can identify and require compliance with mandatory actions to reduce nonpoint source contributions to groundwater contamination, while ramping up on outreach and education efforts.
- 2 State agencies need better coordination to identify, manage and regulate (where necessary) sources of groundwater pollution.** By requiring an interagency task force for both Groundwater Quality Concern Areas and Groundwater Quality Management Areas, SB 1154 ensures that the agencies are well aware of each other's efforts and goals, and can be more efficient and effective in achieving those goals.

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- 3 Oregon needs clearly identified roles for each state agency responsible for implementing the Groundwater Quality Management Act.** SB 1154 lays out agency responsibilities for both Groundwater Quality Concern Areas and Groundwater Quality Management Areas, making it clear what tasks and deliverables are assigned to each agency.
- 4 State agencies need to be accountable for implementing the Groundwater Quality Management Act in a timely and effective manner.** SB 1154 requires each agency on the interagency task force to report to their respective boards and commissions on progress. Additionally, during even-numbered years the lead agency of the interagency task force will report to the Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means.



Groundwater contamination is increasing, and the consequent threats to human health and the environment are increasing as well. People depend on groundwater for their drinking water, and while water providers can remove most groundwater contaminants thereby protecting their clients, people who depend on domestic wells are not so protected. And of course, eventually almost all groundwater becomes surface water, emerging as wetlands or feeding into rivers and lakes populated by fish and relied upon by other wildlife.

We must protect people, ecosystems and wildlife from groundwater pollution by identifying polluted aquifers and working with all land uses to identify, reduce and eliminate sources of that pollution. SB 1154 does just that.

We urge the legislature to pass SB 1154 – and make this the session that commits Oregon to protecting groundwater today and for future generations.

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