



June 9th, 2025

Senate Committee on Rules
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Food & Water Watch Written Testimony on SB 1154

Dear Chair Jama and members of the committee,

Food & Water Watch (FWW) submits the following written testimony to remove our support from SB 1154. Food & Water Watch is a national non-profit organization that mobilizes regular people to build political power to move bold and uncompromised solutions to the most pressing food, water, and climate problems of our time. FWW uses grassroots organizing, media outreach, public education, research, policy analysis, and litigation to protect people's health, communities, and democracy from the growing destructive power of the most powerful economic interests. FWW submits this testimony on behalf of its more than 44,000 members and supporters across Oregon.

While previous iterations of this bill would have helped to address the ongoing public health crisis in our state's Ground Water Management Areas (GWMAs), this latest amendment will do little to improve contaminated groundwater. SB1154-A3 has stripped language that would have required agencies to use their regulatory powers to address the worst cases of groundwater pollution in the state. I urge the committee not to adopt the -A3 amendment and not to move forward with SB1154 this session.

For 35 years nitrate pollution in the Lower Umatilla Basin Groundwater Management Area (LUBGWMA) has grown consistently worse as agencies continue to rely on voluntary action by polluters. Agencies have declined to use their regulatory powers to reduce pollution, hold polluters accountable, or protect frontline communities from the harms of polluted drinking water. While we commend regulatory agencies for beginning to coordinate efforts and providing residents with bottled water, this is a short term solution and does little to address the fact that nitrate levels continue to trend upwards in the LUBGWMA. Already, nitrate tests are showing levels of nitrates not only well above the limit for safe consumption, but also above the level where a reverse osmosis filter would bring the nitrates down to a safe level. Reverse osmosis filters are only effective up to 25 mg/L, and many wells are now testing above that amount. This shows we need agencies not to focus solely on providing residents with water in the short term but addressing nitrate contamination at its sources.

Now is not the time to continue to place industry profits above the health of communities living in GWMAs or in areas that could become GWMAs. Instead, legislators should learn from agency failures in the LUBGWMA – namely, that voluntary reduction strategies do not work and that we

must strengthen the Groundwater Quality Protection Act to require mandatory reductions in fertilizer use, spreading of nitrate laden wastewater, and spreading of liquified manure from Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO)s on fields. Passing strong legislation is necessary to ensure other parts of Oregon do not face the same problems. Unfortunately, not only has this legislative body failed to move two bills this session, SB80 and SB747, that would have addressed pollution at its sources, but now SB1154 has been stripped of the provisions that would give regulatory agencies the authority to make meaningful progress towards addressing pollution. Specifically, this amendment has removed the mandatory review by DEQ & ODA and (if needed) modification of point source permits upon GWMA declaration, and the requirement that OWRD deny new groundwater right applications that would increase or exacerbate groundwater pollution in a GWMA or a GWAC. Without these provisions, this bill does not provide any meaningful relief to residents living in the LUBGWMA and I urge you not to move SB1154 forward. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Aimee Stone
Oregon Organizer, Food & Water Watch