

O'Rielly Patti

From: Amy Patton <kapatton@jeffnet.org>
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2013 8:20 AM
To: Sen Devlin; Rep Buckley; Sen Bates; Sen Dingfelder
Cc: O'Rielly Patti; Rocco Ken G; aerne.melissa@deq.state.or.us
Subject: Ways and Means Testimony for April 4 - OR DEQ Budget SB 5520

April 4, 2013

Joint Ways and Means Committee Members
Oregon Legislature 2013

Re: Testimony Supporting the Statewide Groundwater Monitoring Program Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Policy Option Package #128

Co-Chair Devlin, Co-Chair Buckley, and Members of the Committee,

Please accept my testimony (attached and below) in support of increased funding for the Groundwater Monitoring Program at the Oregon DEQ Laboratory in the new biennium.

I would like to present my strong support for continuation of funding for any and all groundwater protection program positions at DEQ and for a proposal to add two or three groundwater monitoring positions to the laboratory staff.

Groundwater Quality is of critical importance to Oregon's future. Surface water supplies have been completely allocated in many areas of Oregon. More than 700,000 Oregonians (over 90,000 in unincorporated areas of Jackson and Josephine Counties alone) likely rely on private wells for their drinking water. It is estimated that 70% of all Oregonians and 90% of rural residents in Oregon rely on groundwater for some or all of their drinking water supply. This proportion is likely to increase in the future as surface water rights become fully appropriated. And yet the proportion of FTE at DEQ allocated to protection of this essential resource is miniscule.

Areas of Oregon are known to have naturally occurring asbestos and fluoride in groundwater, and many other areas have groundwater contamination due to activities at the surface, sometimes at concentrations creating a health hazard. Homeowners do not receive education, information or guidance regarding how to protect themselves from these hazards. If agencies like the DEQ do not monitor groundwater quality and inform communities of concerns in their areas, it is solely up to the homeowners to investigate for themselves. Since I moved to Southern Oregon in 2000, I have volunteered my time to organize a series of public education classes and conduct free nitrate tests through the local DEQ office. At these classes, well owners are appreciative of the helpful information and those who find that their wells are contaminated with nitrate from nearby agricultural activities or some other source are often surprised. Much more information about rural groundwater quality is needed and much more of this type of public education is needed to provide the basic tools for rural residents to protect their health.

DEQ has information about various rural communities where pesticides have been belatedly detected in local wells, including up to 12 pesticides being detected in a school's water supply – water that was supplied to students daily. Because pesticide contamination is difficult to detect by sight or taste, many of these contamination incidents are only detected when trees die or someone becomes ill. Pesticides are something that homeowners rarely will test for. It is not in the "Top 30" lists that local laboratories suggest for homeowners. Pesticide analyses are very expensive and it takes some research to decide which of the many hundreds of potential pesticides to test for. This is far beyond the expertise of homeowners, or even school districts, and is best done on a regional scale by a public agency. This is one of the services that would be conducted by DEQ Laboratory if funding is provided.

If you have questions or need further information, please contact me at this email address or on my cell phone at 541-690-9983.

Thank you,

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