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Before the Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water

Chair- Representative Brian Clem
Members of the Committee
Testimony by Jerry Schmidt
Supporting HB-3169

Chair Clem and members of the committee, my name is Jerry Schmidt and I have represented the ground water industry before the legislative body for over 25 years. I am offering the support of the industry for the proposals being put forth in HB-3169. The membership of the Oregon Ground Water Association includes: consultants, hydrogeologists, engineers, water well constructors, geotechnical drillers, pump contractors, water treatment installers, and manufacturers and equipment suppliers to the industry. Our Association's purpose is centered on the proper protection and utilization of the resource. In order for our members to offer proper service to the general public they need the data and information called for in Section 1 of HB-3169. The Water Resources Director has been charged by the legislature to regulate groundwater use in order to prevent waste within the capacity of available sources, to see that groundwater is equitably distributed, and to protect groundwater levels. We have been working with the Department on a number of rule revisions and inclusion of special area standards to protect known problem areas. During the discussion last week it was brought to our attention by the staff of the Water Resources Department that they had insufficient information to determine the capacity and physical qualities of many aquifers located around the state and would be seeking some advice (in the form of possible rule changes) to acquire additional funds for further aquifer studies. Projects of this magnitude can not be undertaken on the backs of existing permit holders, but rather needs legislative action and funding to make this happen. Again we strongly support the need for further information, but would also note that a date in line 8 of page 1 (November 30, 2015) would likely not be achievable.

Sections 2 thru 4 propose to establish a Domestic Well Improvement Fund to provide low interest loans to protect those persons in rural Oregon that have met the income standards contained in ORS 456.055. There is definitely a need to protect those people residing in rural Oregon and on a fixed income with a continued source of affordable drinking water. We also would support this portion of the bill.