



The Oregon Farm Bureau and Oregon Cattlemen's Association Support Funding the Harney County Groundwater Study

The Oregon Farm Bureau and the Oregon Cattlemen's Association support the Oregon Water Resources Department's request for \$705,288 in funding to conduct a groundwater study in Harney County. In early 2015, the Oregon Water Resources Department stopped issuing new groundwater permits, which is contained in Section 58 of the -4 amendments to HB 5701. in the Malhuer Basin due to concerns regarding groundwater availability. There have been documented groundwater declines in parts of the basin, but the extent and nature of the long-term water supply cannot be determined without completing a comprehensive groundwater study. While the Department is working to create a program that would allow for a limited amount of new development, long-term planning and management of the Basin's water resources cannot move forward without a better understanding of the groundwater resources in the basin, which only a groundwater study can provide.

Agriculture is the backbone of Harney County, and groundwater resources are critical to both irrigated agriculture and ranching in the community. Since the Department has not completed a comprehensive study of the groundwater resources in the basin, the community is put in the difficult position of being shut down without enough data and information to reach agreement on the nature and extent of the groundwater issues in the basin or develop a plan for managing the basin's water resources. A comprehensive groundwater study – conducted with local input and oversight – is the only way the basin will be able to ensure that its water resources are being effectively managed and move forward with long-term planning.

Given funding constraints, the Department has not been able to provide the community with a concrete guarantee that the groundwater study will be completed within the next 3-5 years. Additional funding for the groundwater study is essential to allowing the Department to honor its commitments, building local faith in the Department's process and ensuring this community is able to engage in local planning to continue to grow economically. The longer the community is without the information they need to engage in local planning and make long-term economic decisions, the greater the local costs of the groundwater shutdown. The Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Harney County Stockgrowers and Harney County Farm Bureau urge you to help the Department honor its commitments to the Harney County community, and support the Oregon Water Resources Department's request for additional funding to complete a groundwater study in the Malhuer Basin.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Mary Anne Nash at maryanne@oregonfb.org or 541-740-4062 or Rocky Dallum at rocky.dallum@tonkon.com or 503-802-2175.