



March 14, 2017

**House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
Representative Brian Clem, Chair**

**Testimony on House Bill 3051
Presented by Racquel Rancier, Senior Policy Coordinator**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 3051, which allows the Water Measurement Cost-Share Program to provide funding to assist with the installation of groundwater use measuring devices.

This proposal was previously introduced as the -2 amendments to House Bill 2297, which this Committee heard on February 9. Legislative Counsel determined that the -2 amendments were outside the relating to clause of HB 2297, leading to introduction of House Bill 3051.

Background

In 2001, House Bill 2713 established a fund to assist water users with installing or replacing water measurement devices to protect in-stream flow or to monitor water rights and streamflow. In 2013, this fund was recapitalized as part of the Department's base budget, allowing the Department to work with landowners to voluntarily install measuring devices on significant points of diversion on high priority streams. The fund can pay up to 75 percent of the cost of installing a measuring device, which typically ranges from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars.

While the focus of the fund was originally on surface water diversions, the Department believes that it would be valuable to assist water users to install measuring devices on wells. Groundwater use data are used for a variety of purposes, such as: conducting basin studies to better understand the groundwater resource and how much is available for withdrawal; determining interference between junior and senior groundwater users; and assessing whether a water user is exceeding the amount authorized on the water right. This data helps the Department manage the resource for water users over the long-term.

What the Bill Does

House Bill 3051 seeks to allow the Water Resources Department, through the existing Water Measurement Cost Share Program, to be able to partner with well owners to fund the installation of devices to measure groundwater use. The bill itself establishes no new measurement requirements and the program can be used to assist water right holders, regardless of whether installation of a measuring device is voluntary or required.

Conclusion

House Bill 3051 utilizes an existing program to provide state funding assistance to partner with well owners to install measuring devices, which will help the Department manage the resource for groundwater users. We urge your support of House Bill 3051.