

Date: May 4, 2017
To: Senate Committee on Environment & Natural Resources
From: The Association of Oregon Counties
Subject: House Bill 3051

Please add to the records of the Senate Committee on & Natural Resources these comments related to House Bill 3051, which is on the committee's agenda for public hearing on May 4, 2017.

AOC supports House Bill 3051

HB 3051 would expand permissible uses of the Water Measurement Cost Share Program Revolving Fund. Established in 2001, this fund was recapitalized in 2013 as part of the Water Resources Department's base budget, allowing the WRD 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. The bill would authorize use of the fund on devices at a point of appropriation, for existing water rights, and to measure ground water.

While the focus of the fund was originally on surface water diversions, the WRD finds 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 a basin study 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 WRD manage the resource for water users over the long-term. The data is also critical to counties when making land-use decisions, where availability of water is a necessary component.

Given the dearth of information about groundwater in Oregon, this new authorization would be invaluable as the state relies ever more on that resource.

Please pass HB 3051.