

HB 2856 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Energy and Environment

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/26, 3/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates \$9,000,000 to the Oregon Water Resources Department (WRD) for groundwater studies, investigations, or gathering and analysis of other groundwater data needed to assess and manage groundwater resources in Oregon's priority basins, as determined by WRD. Directs WRD to submit to the legislature by January 1, 2020 a 10-year plan to study groundwater around the state and detail any additional legislative investment needed for implementation. Directs WRD to submit to the legislature by September 15, 2020 and by September 15, 2021 a report on how appropriation was spent. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

REVENUE: *No revenue impact*

FISCAL: *May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued.*

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Seeking greater understanding of surface water and groundwater interaction around the state to facilitate effective water planning and management
- Oregon Water Resources Department has a team that does one basin study at a time, which takes about five years
- Completed basin studies since the 1990s include portions of the Deschutes, Willamette, and Klamath Basins
- Current study in the Harney Basin, and 12 basins have been prioritized for future studies
- Studies involve collaboration and cost sharing with the U.S. Geological Survey, Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries, and other scientific partners

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Water resources differ greatly across the nearly twenty river basins and nine major geologic areas recognized in Oregon. Differences include how surface water and groundwater interact with one another and the recharge patterns of aquifers, which are made of different materials and are structured differently, depending on the geology of the location. Differences also include precipitation patterns--amount of precipitation, as well as whether it comes in the form of rain or snow--and other geographic features like mountains and valleys. Currently, state agencies monitor groundwater-level trends and groundwater quality in certain areas using tools like observation wells and basin investigations or assessments.

House Bill 2856 would appropriate \$9,000,000 for the Oregon Water Resources Department (WRD) to conduct groundwater studies in priority basins and would require WRD to develop a 10-year groundwater study plan and report back to the legislature on how the appropriation was spent.