



Oregon Association of  
Conservation Districts

April 3rd, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
[senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:senr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

From: The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: Support for SB 511, Informing Groundwater Conservation Efforts in Harney County

To Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Olsen and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 511. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to express support for SB 511, which provides for a ground water study and installation of water conservation measures in Harney County. OACD serves and represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as nonprofit, federal, and state partners like the Oregon Department of Water Resources. **SB 511 would provide critical resources to informing and implementing water conservation measures in Harney County, where recent droughts and groundwater shortages have impacted local wildlife habitat and natural resource-based economies.**

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) were founded following the Dust Bowl, an event in which changing agricultural practices, drought, and wind storms led to catastrophic soil erosion. The Dust Bowl had devastating impacts on ecosystems, the economy, and human health. These impacts brought to national attention the importance of working with landowners and managers to conserve the natural resources that nourish our communities. Recent droughts in Eastern Oregon have again brought the challenge of water resource management to center stage, and local leadership on the issue is evidence both of the urgency of the issue and of local ability to address it. A local collaborative of farmers, ranchers, homeowners, conservation organizations, and local and state government partners has worked hard to lay the groundwork for meeting the challenge. To do so, however, they need to know more about the groundwater in their area that they seek to conserve. Many communities in Oregon have faced the impacts of drought, but Harney County is a high priority both for the severity of water resource challenges and for their ability to address those challenges in the near future. Appropriating \$5 million to study groundwater resources in Harney County would help the community put their conservation

plans into action, ensuring their actions are well-informed by the actual conditions of groundwater in the area.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB 511 and the importance of groundwater research and conservation. **We encourage you to pass SB 511 to support the collaborative, community-based water planning efforts in Harney County, and inform and improve groundwater conservation in Harney County.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Freitas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anna" and last name "Freitas" clearly distinguishable.

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