

HB 2018 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Water

Prepared By: Allison Daniel, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/4, 3/30

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Water Resources Department to enter into a cost-matching agreement with United States Geological Survey (USGS) to develop and publish ground water budgets for all major hydrologic basins in the state; contract for person to produce peer-reviewed report on statewide consumptive water use that summarizes historical irrigation water use for all irrigated fields and estimates open water evaporation from all major reservoirs in the state between 1984 and 2019; establish comprehensive ground water level monitoring network to improve estimates of ground water use; and measure progress in estimating and monitoring ground water levels and use by publishing reports that quantify ground water recharge, producing statewide maps and datasets that quantify open water evaporation, collecting and processing ground water data, assessing the time and cost of ground water studies, and assessing prioritization of water management in major hydrologic basins in the state.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Types of consumptive uses relying on state ground water resources
- Cost of doing comprehensive ground water studies
- Staffing and timing needs for ground water studies

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Makes technical corrections. Changes cutoff date of water use data from 2019 to 2020. Changes “ground water use” to “ground water recharge and consumptive ground water.” Changes “assessing prioritization of water management in major hydrologic basins in this state” to “prioritizing hydrologic basins in this state for study.” Adds requirement that Water Resources Department staff serve as community engagement coordinators to help communities provide necessary data. Adds sunset date of January 2, 2032.

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

REVENUE: No revenue impact.

BACKGROUND:

According to the Water Resources Department (WRD), Oregon currently has over 250,000 known wells, and several thousand new wells are built each year. Well uses range from providing drinking water and water for irrigation and industry to informing ground water levels throughout the state. To monitor ground water, WRD has a network of approximately 1,100 observation wells that provide information on current ground water availability and long-term trends. However, more information is needed in many basins to better understand how ground water uses impact streams, aquifers, and other water sources.

WRD coordinates with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct extensive water basin studies and collect information on ground water levels and use. These studies typically take five to six years to complete, given all basin data must be compiled, reviewed, and analyzed in order to monitor ground water trends. To date, about one-third of the state has had basin studies.

House Bill 2018 would direct WRD to enter into a cost-matching agreement with USGS to produce and publish ground water budgets for all major hydrologic basins in the state, contract for person to produce a report on statewide consumptive water use, establish a ground water level monitoring network, and measure progress in

estimating and monitoring ground water levels and use.

PRELIMINARY