

HB 2018 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Water

Action Date: 03/30/21

Action: Do pass with amendments and be referred to Ways and Means. (Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 7-1-0-0

Yeas: 7 - Helm, Leif, Owens, Reardon, Reynolds, Wilde, Witt

Nays: 1 - Breese-Iverson

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Allison Daniel, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 3/4, 3/30

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Water Resources Department (WRD) to: enter into a cost-matching agreement with United States Geological Survey 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 consumptive water use for all irrigated fields and estimates open water evaporation from all major reservoirs in the state between 1984 and 2020; and expand comprehensive ground water level monitoring network to improve estimates of changes in ground water storage. Directs WRD to measure progress in estimating and monitoring ground water levels, ground water recharge, and consumptive ground water by: publishing one or more 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 conducting ground water studies; and prioritize hydrologic basins in the state for study. Requires that WRD staff serve as community engagement coordinators to help communities provide necessary data and use data collected by WRD as required. Sunsets Act on January 2, 2032.

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:

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 and use data collected by WRD as required. Adds sunset date of January 2, 2032.

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.

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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 A 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 between 1984 and 2020; expand the ground water level monitoring network; and measure progress in estimating and monitoring ground water levels, ground water recharge, and consumptive ground water.