



WaterWatch of Oregon Protecting Natural Flows In Oregon Rivers

**HB 2018
Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon
By Kimberley Priestley
Submitted to the House Water Committee
March 4, 2021**

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. We work to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers and that groundwater is responsibly managed in order to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes, wetlands and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

WaterWatch supports HB 2018 (if adequate funding is provided to OWRD to carry out the identified work).

Basic management of Oregon's water resources is one of the state's most critical environmental and economic challenges. If Oregon wants a sustainable water future, it is critical that Oregon make an adequate investment in water management and science to move forward towards addressing the challenges facing this state.

Surface water is over-appropriated in nearly every basin of this state; as a result more people are turning to groundwater for new development. But in many areas of the state, the OWRD does not have adequate information to ensure sustainable groundwater allocation and management.

Oregon's Groundwater Act of 1955 (ORS 537.505-795) contains requirements for allocation and management of groundwater by Oregon Water Resources Department, including that reasonably stable groundwater levels be maintained. It is critical that the department have the groundwater data and analysis necessary to responsibly manage groundwater, as required by statute.

HB 2018 would allow the OWRD to move forward on developing foundational data and analysis that the department needs to responsibly manage groundwater across the state. **Key to the bill's success will be adequate funding for the agency to carry out this critical work.** Notably, Oregon's Groundwater Act of 1955 already broadly identifies the need for study of aquifers, which has not been accomplished state-wide. What is needed is both HB 2018 *and* accompanying funding.

We would note that the bill inaccurately describes the "ground water level monitoring network" in subsection (3) as being "to improve estimates of ground water use." The "ground water level monitoring network" does not estimate ground water use, rather it "improves estimates of ground water levels." We would urge the committee to support an amendment to correct this.

We urge the Committee to support HB 2018. Thank you for consideration of our testimony.

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