



March 4, 2021

Representative Helm, Chair
House Committee on Water

Re: Trout Unlimited Comments on HB 2018

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill (HB) 2018. My name is Chandra Ferrari and I represent Trout Unlimited (TU), a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of cold-water fishes, such as trout and salmon, and their habitats. TU has more than 300,000 members and supporters nationwide including over 3,000 in Oregon.

TU supports HB 2018 which directs the collection and analysis of foundational groundwater data that will allow the state to understand if a basin is overallocated, develop groundwater budgets to help manage the resource, and prioritize future groundwater investigations. Many rivers in Oregon are over-appropriated resulting in a significant number of water rights applications for groundwater use. Unfortunately, OWRD often lacks adequate data to ensure that its decisions on these applications will further sustainable water management goals.

It is clear that several of our groundwater basins are currently in extreme risk and immediate study and action is necessary to provide for appropriate long-term management of our community's water resources. It is critical that OWRD make decisions based on sound science as impacts to aquifers are far-reaching and, in some cases, irreversible. For instance, groundwater pumping can reduce the flow of water in connected streams and rivers to the detriment of surface water beneficial uses. Agriculture, cities, fisheries, and other resources are harmed as a result. Over-pumping can result in overdraft conditions, which is a significant issue that can result in land subsidence and reduced aquifer storage capacity, a condition that is already observed in several other western states. Over-pumping can also cause impacts that are less visible and less well-understood such as declining surface water levels which in turn negatively affect dependent ecosystems and surface water quality and the people who depend on them.

It is extremely important that OWRD have resources to properly manage our state's groundwater. The reliance on groundwater is only expected to increase as Oregon confronts the challenges presented by population growth, drought and climate change. TU requests that the Committee support HB 2018 with adequate funding to ensure its implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 2018.

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