

I would like to address the chair Representative Ken Helm,

As well as all the other chairs and members of the House Committee On water.

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Dear Committee Chair Representative Ken Helm and committee members,

I would like to say first of I am very much in favor of House Bill 3092. I am one of the domestic well owners that are having water problems. Our wells are being taken away because there are too many alfalfa pivots placed on top of our aquifer. This has created a huge hole and all the surrounding wells are running into it. My well number 50399, is losing about one foot a year. According to the experts it will never stop dropping unless a way can be found to slow down all the pumping.

I live in Harney County and I have lived here on and off for about 47 years. I have a small place that is 25 miles south of Burns. I am, what you call, a domestic well owner in our county with what was a very good well. I have owned my land for around 30 years and 22 years ago I started with sage brush and put my house here. I didn't put any pivots or other irrigation on my ground within the 30 years of owning my property, because I knew there could be water problems, after all we live in the high desert. After drilling my well I felt very grateful that I had gotten good water and there was lots of it at that time.

One day when I was up on the ground above my house, I noticed that there had been more pivots placed close to my house. I have farmed in my younger years and knew that those pivots pump around 800 gallons of water a minute. I thought maybe I better see if my well had been affected so I got some sting and a bolt with my measuring tape. I was shocked to find out that my well had dropped! I went to my first water board meeting and got my name on the list to have my well measured by OWRD because of the water study going on in our county. After figuring out my well is being taken away by one foot a year now for the documented time of three years. I believe it started dropping way before that. Along with myself, there are a number of other domestic well owners who are in the same position. This problem started after there were too many water permits issued in my area with a large number of alfalfa pivots being placed here on top of our aquifer. We went from just a handful of pivots when we moved out here to over 150 now and it doesn't seem to be stopping.

I have been told by OWRD experts that my well will not stop dropping now. That in time my well will drop all the way to the very bottom. So, you see, that at some time in the near future, my well is going to need to be deepened because of too much pumping of our ground water. House bill 3092 could help a number of us hopefully deepen our wells. Although I am hoping to not have to deepen my well because deepening wells can cause problems with arsenic, salts and other very bad things that would make it non-potable. It may be the best and only option some of us have.

I support HB 3092 – recognizing it may need some small changes to make sure it covers enough cost per well and the right kinds of actions like well deepening. It will not solve the problem for domestic well owners in Harney County because it looks like the problem will just keep getting worse, but it could provide important help for some people who have been badly affected by the state issuing too many groundwater permits. I am more than willing to answer any questions you might have.

I urge you to support HB 3092. Thank you for considering my testimony.

Ben McCanna