



The Nature Conservancy in Oregon  
821 SE 14th Avenue  
Portland, OR 97214-2537

tel 503 802-8100

fax 503 802-8199

[nature.org/oregon](http://nature.org/oregon)

February 24, 2021

House Committee on Water

Testimony on HB 3092: Greater Harney Valley Groundwater

Submitted by: Amelia Porterfield, Senior Policy Advisor

---

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for sponsoring and hearing HB 3092, which establishes a cost-sharing grant program to remediate groundwater declines for domestic well users in the Greater Harney Valley Groundwater Area of Concern.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a science-based, non-partisan organization committed to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Oregon, TNC has over 80,000 supporters and members in every county. Based in communities around the state, we manage lands and waters in varied ecosystems and partner with ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature.

TNC is a member of the Community-Based Water Planning Collaborative in the Harney Basin. This collaborative is comprised of a wide range of stakeholders, including state agencies, irrigators, conservation organizations, and domestic well users. Together, these participants have made significant progress to identify critical water resource solutions that will benefit a sustainable economy, diverse ecosystems, and resilient water supplies.

A 2019 study by the Oregon State University Survey Research Center showed that nearly 30% of surveyed residents living within the Greater Harney Valley Groundwater Area of Concern have been subjected to decreased quantity of groundwater for domestic use, and nearly 10% do not have enough water to meet their basic needs. This difficult situation requires creative solutions.

The cost-share grant program established by HB 3092 would enable the state to work with these vulnerable and at-risk communities to secure safe, sufficient drinking water supplies in a basin that has been significantly affected by the over-allocation of groundwater rights. Providing cost-share opportunities for domestic well users would benefit water security impacted by current groundwater declines while increasing resilience to future climate conditions.

The cost-share grant program would provide important support for the basin while the Community-Based Water Planning Collaborative and Oregon Water Resources Department develop additional solutions to stabilize the declining aquifer. We appreciate the committee's leadership on this issue and for bringing this legislation forward.