

HB 2867 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/6

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Establishes Oregon Desalination Authority (Authority). Requires Authority to study and develop techniques for converting saline water into fresh water that can be used for drinking water, irrigation, or other human needs. Authorizes authority to establish desalination facilities in this state, subject to the availability of moneys appropriated to the authority for that purpose. Establishes that the Authority is under the supervision and control of a director (Director), who is responsible for the performance of the duties, functions, and powers of the Authority. Requires the Governor to appoint a Director of the Authority, subject to confirmation by the Senate. Requires the Director to be paid a salary as provided by law or as prescribed by the Governor. Authorizes Director, subject to the approval of the Governor, to organize and reorganize the administrative structure of the Authority as the Director considers appropriate to properly conduct the work of the Authority. Authorizes Director to divide the functions of the Authority into administrative divisions and, subject to the approval of the Governor, to appoint an individual to administer each division. Requires Director to, by written order filed with the Secretary of State, appoint a deputy director who serves at the pleasure of the Director and has authority to act for the Director in the absence of the Director and is subject to the control of the Director at all times. Requires Director to appoint all subordinate officers and employees of the Authority, prescribe their duties, and fix their compensation. Authorizes Authority to adopt rules for the administration of the laws that the Authority is charged with administering. Authorizes Director to establish any advisory or temporary advisory or technical committee the Director considers necessary to aid and advise the Director of the Authority in the performance of the functions of the Authority. Requires Director to determine the representation, membership, terms, and organization of the committees and to appoint the members of the committees. Requires Director to be an ex officio member of each committee. Establishes potential reimbursement from funds available to the Authority for actual and necessary travel and other expenses incurred by committee members in the performance of official duties, as allowed by ORS 292.495. Requires Authority to study the development and maintenance of a statewide system of desalination facilities in the state. Requires Authority to submit its findings in a report that may include recommendations for legislation to the interim committees of the Legislative Assembly related to water no later than June 30, 2025. Appropriates to the Authority, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, out of the General Fund, the following amounts for the following purposes: 1) \$____ for the establishment of the Authority pursuant to sections 1 to 5 of the Act and 2) \$____ to carry out the reporting requirements. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

- *REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued*
- *FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued*

Subsequent Referral to *Ways and Means*.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.

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According to the Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon and the western United States are experiencing a megadrought, which is defined as a decades-long period of extreme dryness. Megadroughts can impact people and the environment when water supplies are disrupted. Responses to drought and megadrought may include instituting restrictions on irrigation for agriculture, cities restricting the use of water, state agencies creating long-term resiliency plans, and, in some cases, relying on desalination to create fresh water.

Desalination is the process of removing dissolved salt from saltwater. Distillation, as well as technological processes, can be used to desalinate saltwater, but, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, to provide fresh drinking water for large populations can be “expensive, energy-intensive, and involve large-scale facilities.”

House Bill 2867 would establish the Oregon Desalination Authority and would direct the Authority to study the development and maintenance of a statewide system of desalination facilities in Oregon.