

SB 455 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Natural Resources

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/1, 3/1

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs the Oregon Business Development Department (OBDD) to establish and administer the Aquifer Recharge Due Diligence Grant Program and Aquifer Recharge Testing Forgivable Loan Program to offer due diligence grants and forgivable loans to public bodies for specified activities or costs related to aquifer recharge, storage, and recovery. Specifies eligible public bodies, activities, and costs. Requires applicants to submit an application along with specified documentation. Requires that OBDD approve or reject each application and determine grant and loan awards. Directs OBDD and recipients to submit a report to water-related interim legislative committees by September 15 of each year. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

REVENUE: May have revenue impact, but no statement yet issued

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Expands uses of aquifer modeling under due diligence grants and forgivable loans to include testing aquifer storage and recovery. Changes requirement that a basin or aquifer specified in the grant or loan application be 'classified' to a requirement that it be 'restrictively classified.' Replaces specific statutory reference for designation of critical groundwater areas with reference for designation by statute, rule, or order. Includes, for purposes of forgivable loans, limited licenses issued by the Oregon Water Resources Department to store and use water for aquifer storage and recovery testing purposes.

FISCAL: May have fiscal impact, but no statement yet issued

REVENUE: Revenue lite issued

BACKGROUND:

Aquifer recharge (AR) and aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) are natural processes enhanced by humans, or human-made processes, that convey water underground. Projects for AR and ASR are increasing in the west, particularly in areas that face limited water availability and/or many competing uses. The projects aim to replenish groundwater stored in underground aquifers, which may be ultimately used for drinking water, irrigation, industrial use, ecosystem restoration projects, and other uses. Common methods to convey water underground include injection, infiltrations pits and basins, and surface spreading.

The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) authorizes AR and ASR projects by permit; AR projects must meet anti-degradation standards and ASR projects must meet drinking water standards. OWRD assesses and monitors areas facing limited water availability statewide through 22 designated groundwater administrative areas. The department has established seven critical groundwater areas, classified additional areas as having restricted uses, and has withdrawn basins or aquifers from further groundwater appropriation. OWRD has also assessed the state for areas geologically suitable to support underground water storage.

Senate Bill 455 would direct the Oregon Business Development Department to establish and administer the Aquifer Recharge Due Diligence Grant Program and Aquifer Recharge Testing Forgivable Loan Program for grants

and forgivable loans to public bodies.

PRELIMINARY