

Submitter: Peter van de Kamp
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources
Measure: SB85

Before retirement I farmed in Scio, OR and practiced geology. Both endeavors gained me experience in groundwater hydrology in numerous areas of the western states. Notable is the fact that excess water pumping from aquifers for large scale irrigation projects depletes the supply to low demand domestic water wells.

There is an issue with water needs for the proposed large chicken farm at Jordan, OR. Assuming a modest requirement of average 0.5 gallon per day per bird, 500,000 birds need 250,000 gallons of water per day. Cleaning and maintenance operations for the facility will require additional water. To meet these demands, the five wells drilled for the proposed farm would each have to pump constantly at 35 gallons per minute. Without long term testing it has not been established that this is possible. Further, at the time of drilling the 5 wells, it was noted that muddy water appeared in a nearby residential well. Prior to that time there was no problem with water quality in the residential well. It is likely that the new wells introduced muddy drilling fluid into the aquifer supplying the residential well thus confirming communication between wells in the aquifer. It is quite possible that high pumping rates would deplete the aquifer and dry up the residence well and others dependent on that source. Note that the existing wells use water for domestic household purposes with demands of less than 3000 gallons per day. In this neighborhood, limited water availability has only allowed dry (non-irrigated) farming.

The strong possibility exists that insufficient water is available for the high demands of the proposed chicken operation. The State has an obligation to protect established water users by ensuring their water sources are not compromised.