

Submitter: Patty Dorroh
On Behalf Of: The People of Harney County
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4049

Thank you for allowing submission of written testimony in support of HB 4049. My name is Patty Dorroh and I have the honor and privilege of serving as a Harney County Commissioner.

On behalf of the people of Harney County, please support HB 4049, which is the critical, missing element to the Oregon Water Resources Commission's rules and plans for groundwater recovery of the Harney Basin.

This legislation will enable the water users of the sub areas of the Harney Basin to come together to cooperatively manage the reduction of groundwater use, and achieve stable conditions, while respecting local conditions and economic realities.

While existing statute does allow Voluntary Agreements, HB 4049 is needed. The present ORS 537.745 on Voluntary Agreements is not sufficient and has not been utilized by water users in the state of Oregon since the 1950s. That is very telling. New legislation is needed, here it is, and that's why we have the Oregon Legislature – to update, add, change, and improve existing law.

Water right holders in Harney County have worked tirelessly and collaboratively to create this agreement language, which will enable significant groundwater use reductions, while reducing economic impact.

On behalf of the people of Harney County – as well as for counties across the state that may soon need to help develop their own voluntary agreement solutions, please pass HB 4049. One size does not fit all. Good government should not stand against people-led solutions.

Developing the path to achieve groundwater stability is the goal of the water users of Harney County. In fact, HB 4049 will not hinder the state's ability to sustainably manage groundwater in the Harney Basin: it will ensure its success. This is not a complicated bill; it does, however, include the specifics needed to develop meaningful and lasting voluntary agreements that will succeed. Pushing this out into the future until there's a full legislative session is not the answer. The answer, HB 4049, is here now. This is a good and needed bill that will enable Harney Basin's recovery to begin right away.

Thank you for supporting passage of HB 4049. We truly appreciate it.