



TO – Oregon Water Resources Commission
FROM – Oregon REALTORS®
DATE – June 5, 2024
SUBJECT – Proposed Groundwater Allocation Rules

Chair Quaempts, Vice-Chair Smitherman, and members of the Oregon Water Resources Commission,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Groundwater Allocation rules. Oregon REALTORS®, Oregon Home Builders Association, and Oregon Property Owners Association supports the efficient, beneficial use of water in the state, however, we are greatly concerned that the proposed rules as they would apply an unscientific and generalized system of groundwater management that could have serious implications statewide.

We are greatly concerned about the impact of the proposed rules on the ongoing efforts across the state to increase the production of needed housing. Specifically, we are concerned that these rules will have a substantial impact on the ability of cities to identify and obtain sufficient water resource allocations necessary to support the production of needed housing. While we acknowledge the amended language in OAR 690-008-0001 and OAR 690-009-0010 allows for the creation of basin program rules with unique groundwater level decline thresholds, this allowance alone is insufficient to prevent negative impacts to housing production.

As increasing housing production remains the top priority of Governor Kotek and a top priority of the Oregon Legislature, it appears that OWRD has developed these rules in isolation from state agencies tasked with increasing housing production, such as DLCD. Like our state agencies, Oregon’s water providers will also play a key role in increasing housing production by providing more water and water infrastructure to support development, but to do so, they will need more access to water. OWRD has proposed certain actions that cities and providers can take to address this concern, such as building at higher densities or encouraging water conservation, but these suggestions are insufficient to bridge the gap in groundwater and housing needs.

Similarly, we are concerned about the impact of the proposed rules on economic development. If businesses which need water to support their operations are unable to, or

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lack confidence in their ability to, obtain groundwater permits, these businesses will establish elsewhere. When combined with the impacts of the proposed rules on housing production, businesses that are struggling to attract employees will struggle even further to attract and retain workers, hamstringing the economic development efforts of these communities.

We respectfully request that the Commission not adopt the rules as currently drafted, and instead, redraft the rules as needed to ensure that Oregon's plans for groundwater management are based upon sound science and are made responsive to local resource capacities at the forefront of plan development.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments.

Brock Nation – Policy Director, Oregon REALTORS®

Jodi Hack – Chief Executive Officer, Oregon Home Builders Association