



SENATOR DANIEL BONHAM

June 14, 2024

Via Electronic Mail

Oregon Water Resources Department
775 Summer St NE, Suite A
Salem OR 97301

Dear Board Members,

I am writing to encourage the Water Resources Department and the Water Resources Commission to discontinue further consideration of the current proposed rules regarding the future allocation of groundwater resources within the state. As an alternative, I suggest the rules be held in abeyance at the present time.

Given the time expended with the development of said rules, it may be appropriate to reconstitute the rules advisory committee previously engaged in developing the proposed rules. The purpose for this continued review would be further clarification of the rules and how the rules will ultimately impact the future use and management of the state's groundwater resources.

To the extent the proposed rules are intended to be applied to new or future uses of groundwater, I strongly recommend the Department consider establishing a separate division within its administrative rule framework, specifically delineating the new rules are to be applied on a prospective basis and will not adversely impact existing uses. In so doing, I believe this may serve to avoid future controversies associated with the actual intent and application of the rules.

Finally, I recommend additional consideration of the proposed rules and how such rules interface with ongoing planning efforts of the Department. Specifically, the traditional development of basin plans takes into consideration the individual conditions existing within the various water basins of the state. The emphasis on "place-based planning" efforts during recent years serves to address the unique conditions and issues existing within various basins or regions of the state. Suggesting the application of a set of rules to uniformly extend throughout the state seems in direct conflict with basin plans and placed-based planning efforts.

In summary, I strongly encourage the Department and Commission give further review and re-evaluation of the proposed rules before advancing the rules.

Respectfully,

Daniel Bonham
Senate Republican Leader, District 26
