

**Testimony of Jerry Schmidt**  
**HB-2705**  
**Government Relations**  
**Oregon Ground Water Association**  
**Before the House Committee on Energy and Environment**  
**March 22, 2017**

**Position**

Chair Helm and committee members, for the record my comments are prepared to address the concerns of the Oregon Ground Water Association regarding HB-2705. Even though this bill would be a substantial financial benefit to our members, we are **opposed to the bill**. Our members include those who manufacture and supply the measuring devices, contractors who install and maintain the equipment, and technical people who report the information to the Water Resources Department on behalf of the water appropriators. Currently the Water Resources Department has been requiring most water right permits to measure water use and has been doing so since the early 1990's. In addition the Department also has other tools which it uses in the certification and transfer process to gain further data for management activities for those appropriators that were issued water rights prior to meter requirements.

**Background**

Our industry has been active in promoting the acquisition and public access to water data to aid in the management of the water resources of our state. In 1993 the industry sponsored a bill (HB-3496) that authorized a shift of surplus funds from a dedicated fund (\$689,000) to move the paper records of the Water Resources Department (WRD) into a digital format that would be accessible to both the Department and the general public. In addition the industry has worked to move much of the data that is internally used by the WRD staff into a public format. This process is still ongoing and is less than perfect. The Water Resources Commission is currently working with the staff of the WRD to improve data collection, analysis, and sharing of information with the general public. While this process has just started (and is centered on ground water), the WRD plans to expand this project into a public format this year to share ideas and receive input from the public. This would seem to be the most logical approach to secure the fundamental tools necessary for better water management.

## **Problems**

This bill has a number of technical problems in addition to the concerns already mentioned. In Section 4 of the bill it requires the water appropriators to report water amount, rate and duty information, and report a daily rate of appropriation. Current meters that are being used in the field do not record in terms of maximum daily rates. The selection of meters can require considerable technical knowledge and need adequate flow information to correctly install the proper meter. The cost of retrofitting an existing installation to install a proper metering device may increase the total project funding by 3 to 6 times due to the re-design to have the meter read correctly. Section 4, lines 9 & 10, of the bill also require ground water appropriators to include information on ground water levels and report that information to the Department. Ground Water levels are not taken by meters and may require the well to be redesigned in order to obtain accurate water levels. The addition of lines 9 & 10, which talk about a separate process, adds little clarity to the rest of the proposed legislation.

## **Conclusion**

The Water Resources Department currently has the authority to require installation of meters, and has been give powers to secure additional reporting in areas that need further information. Our industry has concerns that the WRD is still behind in processing all the information it receives into a digital format. Considerable strides have been made, but to compound the problems with an influx of information, at great cost, without justification does not lead to a resolution of better data management or resource protection. **The Oregon Ground Water Opposes HB-2705.**