

**Testimony of Jerry Schmidt**  
**HB-2707**  
**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 firm, OWC LLC, is employed by the Oregon Ground Water Association to represent their interests before the 2017 Legislative Assembly. It has been my pleasure to represent the industry on water issues before the Water Resources Department and the Legislative Assembly for over 30 years. The men and women in the Oregon Ground Water Association include well contractors, pump installers, water treatment specialists, water right examiners, civil engineers, hydrogeologists, geotechnical and monitoring well constructors, lawyers, and the people who represent the manufacture and suppliers of ground water products. Our industry is a constant user of data, and we are always seeking avenues for the production of good, creditable sources of information regarding ground water. It has been our position that management studies that are funded by the General fund are the correct way, and **we do not oppose** the process outlined in HB-2707. If the committee is concerned with the use of ground water models we would encourage you to examine the possibility of funding an increase in water level measurement through the WRD's observation well network.

**History**

The current Water Resources Department's State Observation well network began in the late 50's or early 60's. At this point it was a series of wells scattered around Oregon that were being studied by the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Sometime in the 60's the network was taken over by the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) and by 1973 there were over 800 wells in the system. By the late 70's the State Observation Well Network was overhauled and the number was reduced to the neighborhood of 350 active sites. The reasons given for the reduction were: (1) wells on the network were giving

duplicate data, (2) some wells did not have proper documentation and (3) because of budgetary problems resulting in maintaining the larger database. Most of the wells that were originally put on the system were there because of a perceived problem, or because the OWRD had received a request from another agency or from citizens in the area. After the reduction of the program in the late 70's the number appears to remain fairly stable to date. Budget documents from the 90's indicate that the Department was shifting its focus from using long term hydrographs (compiled through the State Observation Well Network) to a more extensive use of computer modeling. The Department has made repeated requests to the legislature through the years to fund the use of water models in conjunction with the USGS similar to the funding proposed in HB-2707.

In the 2007-09 Governor's recommended budget the Department identified the benchmark for maintaining the State Observation Well Network at 350 wells. The budget document goes on to state that "as wells are dropped from the well network, they should be replaced with other monitoring locations..."

### **Current Activities**

When looking at the Department's current website (under the ground water section) a download could be made of existing water level data to find over 3,000 listed wells with water level data. Within this inventory are the current observation wells in the active State Well Net program which the Water Resources Department has identified in its Key Performance Measure program. While the number listed in the Key Performance Measures is described as the active wells in the program not all of these wells are current and some lack data entry for a variety of reasons. These wells in the State Well net program are monitored by Oregon Water Resources Department personnel and their staff has indicated that they also take water level measurements on additional wells that are not in the State Observation Well Network.

The Department also indicated about 1/3 of the wells listed on their web page have a condition on the water right that requires water level measurement (usually by persons other than OWRD staff), and that the information is required to be submitted to the Department. We hope the committee might give this process some consideration should they want to examine an alternative.