

Smith Holly

From: Ann Vileisis <annvil@earthlink.net>
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2017 6:35 PM
To: HEE Exhibits
Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bills 2705, 2706, and 2707

Greetings,

I am writing in support of House Bills 2705, 2706, and 2707 because assuring a water supply for Oregonians is a fundamental need for the future.

I support HB 2705 because knowing how much and how quickly we are using our water resources is critical to ensuring fair and sensible management decisions – especially when considering new water permit applications in water scarce regions. Even on the “wet side” where I live, we are up against scarcity in summer months—a fact made plain during the recent drought. Measurement of water use has been identified as a need across the state for decades, but little progress has been made despite continued calls for smarter water management. Now is the time to move ahead.

I support HB 2707 because I am concerned that too little attention has been paid to groundwater and its role in our water supply. Nearly one million Oregonians rely on groundwater for their drinking water source, and groundwater demand is increasing. More than 5,000 farms in Oregon rely on well water to survive. A key finding of a December 2016 audit of the Oregon Water Resources Department’s identified the need for greater focus on groundwater protection. However, at the pace of only two groundwater basin studies completed every five years, it will take decades to have a full accounting of our groundwater resources. This is not acceptable. Of course, groundwater also supplies a base flow for rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands – an important consideration for maintaining the health of Oregon’s fish runs and spectacular landscapes.

Finally, I support HB 2706 because the December 2016 audit of the Oregon Water Resources Department found that the agency is chronically underfunded and lacks the resources to adequately manage our state’s surface and groundwaters. Without a stable funding source, the Department cannot fulfill its responsibilities to ensure the long-term sustainability of Oregon’s rivers and water supplies, economy, and quality of life into the future.

These sensible bills can play a fundamental role in bringing Oregon’s water policy into the 21st century.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

/s/ Ann Vileisis

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