

Nimble approach considered for Oregon groundwater

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Oregon water regulators would adopt a nimble and cheaper strategy for measuring groundwater resources under a bill aimed at preventing aquifer over-pumping.

The method proposed under House Bill 2018 would combine new satellite technology with expanded well monitoring and help from federal geologists to develop “water budgets” for major basins across the state.

Though less comprehensive than groundwater basin studies, which measure the direction and speed of water movement, such water budgets are less time-consuming and can help forestall over-appropriation problems, according to proponents.

At the current rate, with

an under-funded staff at the Oregon Water Resources Department, it would take at least 30 years to complete groundwater studies for all the state’s major hydrological basins, said Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, the bill’s chief sponsor.

“If we’re still having this conversation in 10 years, litigation is going to be multiple times higher than it is now,” Owens said.

The absence of water budgets can cause the “hidden resource” of groundwater to get over-allocated, prompting eventual regulatory curtailments that spur legal actions, he said. Meanwhile, rural communities that are economically dependent on irrigated agriculture “start to wither.”

“It’s not good for the environment, it’s not good for the social structure, it’s not good for the agricultural



EO Media Group

An irrigation pivot in Eastern Oregon. Lawmakers are considering a more nimble approach to studying groundwater levels.

community,” Owens said. “We start pitting farmers against community, farmers against farmers, and farmers against the state.”

Water budget information could have forestalled

groundwater over-appropriation in Oregon’s Harney Basin and it can still help regulators and communities better plan for looming problems elsewhere in the state, he said.

“Where can we look at more development? Where should we slow down development?” Owens said. “Where do you really need to sit down with communities and figure out the cause and effect of what we’ve done?”

The problem of unknown groundwater resources has persisted despite the problems in the Harney Basin: Of the 153 groundwater pumping permits issued in 2017, for example, nearly 80% didn’t determine if drilling would occur in an over-appropriated area, he said.

One component of HB 2018’s strategy would rely on the Open ET technology platform developed by NASA, Google and non-profit groups, which uses satellite imagery to estimate evapotranspiration and thus water usage across wide swaths of landscape.

Acquiring the necessary data, including historical imagery going back decades, would cost about \$500,000, according to OWRD.

The bill’s second component, a cost-matching agreement with the U.S. Geological Survey to develop water budgets, would cost the state roughly \$1 million over 6 years.

Expanding the state’s network of monitoring wells, potentially by drilling dedicated wells or retrofitting abandoned ones, would require additional staff at OWRD but the agency didn’t specify a funding amount.

In the past, bills aimed at improving studies of the state’s groundwater resources were estimated to cost roughly \$9 million, said Rep. Ken Helm, D-Beaverton, chair of the House Water Committee.

Oregon Court of Appeals weighs in on barn renovations

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Renovating a barn to host weddings doesn’t necessarily transform it into a structure that’s prohibited in an exclusive farm zone, according to Oregon’s Court of Appeals.

The appellate court has determined that Clackamas County’s approval of a barn remodeling project for a “home occupation” events venue shouldn’t have been blocked by the state’s Land Use Board of Appeals.

Constructing a small food

preparation area, replacing a dirt floor with concrete for dancing and installing sound-proofing, new siding and additional doors doesn’t mean “the building would no longer be usable as a barn,” the ruling said.

Landowner Mark Herkamp obtained permission for the project from a county hearings officer but LUBA overturned that approval last year, ordering the local government to consider whether the proposal can move forward “without the extensive renovations and construc-

tion elements.”

Instead of examining whether the evidence supported the hearings officer’s decision, LUBA wrongly acted as the “factfinder” and “appears to have substituted its own judgment about the character of that barn,” the appellate court said.

Nothing in the record indicates the food preparation area — which would only take up 7% of the structure — and other changes can’t exist in an EFU zone as long as “all of its other features are those of a barn,” the ruling said.

However, the Court of Appeals has also ruled that it’s possible for a barn overhaul in an EFU zone to go too far.

The appellate court upheld LUBA’s ruling that removing livestock stalls to divide another barn into “brides and grooms” rooms would change that second structure’s character enough to violate land use law.

The ruling also upheld LUBA’s decision that constructing a new restroom building and septic field to accommodate up to 300 people wasn’t allowed in

the EFU zone.

Opponents of the barn renovation project fear that turning farm structures into dance or banquet halls will attract visitors and traffic who will disrupt farm machinery and other agricultural practices. Such venues also drive up land values until agriculture becomes economically unviable, critics say.

Apart from the question of barn renovations, the Court of Appeals weighed in on the number of workers who can be employed at one time in an EFU home occupation,

such as the proposed wedding venue.

The farmland preservation group 1,000 Friends of Oregon argued such home occupations are prohibited from employing more than five people — such as caterers and photographers — even if they weren’t all on-site at once.

LUBA disagreed with that interpretation and the appellate court has now upheld its interpretation of land use law, ruling that the five-person limit only applies to people working simultaneously at the site.



Coastal

www.CoastalFarm.com

**PROUD TO SUPPORT
Members & Families of FFA**

Albany - Eugene - Roseburg - Woodburn - Cornelius - Oregon City - Gresham - The Dalles - White City
Redmond - Klamath Falls, OR • Yakima - East Wenatchee - Auburn - Mount Vernon, Marysville, Sequim, WA



5224780-1



**D. Stutzman
FARMS**
www.stutzman-environmental.com
Proud Supporter of FFA
P.O. Box 307 • Canby, OR 97013
888-877-7665

Wilco funds Oregon FFA chapter grants that fuel local success

In 2014 Doug Hoffman, past CEO of Wilco, learned there was a need to support local FFA chapter projects that were not receiving funding from other sources. He decided to try something new to help those who needed a vote of confidence and an investment to bring their idea to life. Doug and his team developed the chapter grant program and started the program off with a generous \$25,000 gift to Oregon FFA. Over the past seven years, Wilco has donated over \$1 million to the Oregon FFA Foundation, including their \$25,000 annual contribution to support the growing and competitive chapter grant projects. Close to 25 grants have been funded each school year, with more than 130 projects funded since the start.

A Wilco chapter grant helped fund Harrisburg FFA’s Agriculture Education Greenhouse remodel. With grant funding, the chapter purchased tools students used to build tables and carts that were used to grow plants and display products for their plant sale. More than 30 students were involved in the remodel, which boosted annual plant sales from \$300 to more than \$2,000! The tools and equipment were also used by the Harrisburg Manufacturing Department and High School in several service projects in the local community. Teague Teece, Harrisburg FFA advisor said, “We are thrilled with the impact the Wilco Chapter grant funding has provided for Harrisburg FFA and our community.”

Tillamook FFA was awarded a Wilco chapter grant to support their school-based dog-grooming Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) enterprise. Through this enterprise, students gain hands-on experience and technical skills they can apply to a career in the veterinary science field. Students run the enterprise like a business, scheduling appointments, filing paperwork, performing services, and charging minimal fees. The Wilco Chapter Grant purchased a professional grade dog nail trimmer, clippers, and blades. Brooklyn Bush, Tillamook FFA advisor said, “The Tillamook FFA Chapter can continue teaching students and serving the community in a new and different way. We are deeply grateful to Wilco for their support in helping make this project happen.”

Oregon FFA Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. The mission of the Foundation is to coordinate sustainable, long-term funding for agriculture education and Oregon FFA.

Proud Supporter of



Doerfler Farms
12333 Silver Falls Hwy SE
Aumsville, OR 97325
Phone: (503) 769-2205



**D. Stutzman
FARMS**
www.stutzman-environmental.com
Proud Supporter of FFA
P.O. Box 307 • Canby, OR 97013
888-877-7665

Proud Sponsor of FFA



**Branson
TRACTORS**
THE TRACTOR STORE
(541) 342-5464
5450 W. 11th, Eugene, OR
5203345-1




The Wilco chapter grant purchased a professional grade dog nail trimmer, clippers, and blades for the Tillamook FFA.



A Wilco chapter grant helped fund Harrisburg FFA’s Agriculture Education Greenhouse remodel.




**IOKA
MARKETING**
503-873-6498
877-FOR-IOKA
www.iokamarketing.com
Silverton, Oregon
Proud Supporter of FFA




Klopfenstein Ag Service

503-932-0766
klopfensteinag.com | Silverton, OR

TREE & BRUSH REMOVAL **TREE PLANTING** **DRIP LINE INSTALLATION**





5223765-1