



PRESS RELEASE HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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As Oregonians Face Historic Drought, Go Without Clean Drinking Water, Unconstitutional Walkout Stalls Urgent Solutions

Central and Eastern Oregon communities hit the hardest by these crises.

SALEM, Ore. - A [historic drought](#) and [dwindling access to clean drinking water](#) pose existential threats to communities in every corner of Oregon, especially in Central and Eastern Oregon, represented by Senate Republicans.

In addition to the [\\$110 million Drought and Water Security Budget](#), bipartisan, urgent solutions and policies to the drought and drinking water crises could fall to the wayside if the Senate Republicans' extreme, unconstitutional, anti-abortion walkout persists.

These policies build off of last year's [\\$100 million Climate Resilience Budget](#), as well as the \$100 million drought relief investment in Oregon's farmers during the December 2021 Special Session.

"Oregon farmers, ranchers, landscapes, and communities, can't wait," said [Representative Ken Helm \(D-Beaverton\)](#), chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water. "There is not enough water supply for all the competing needs. From overallocation of water resources to aging infrastructure and threats to community drinking water sources, Oregonians are at risk. Farmers are at risk. Our ecosystem is at risk. We must act now."

"We need Senate Republicans to come back and fight for their districts," said [Senator Jeff Golden \(D-Ashland\)](#), who chairs the Senate Committee on Natural Resources. "This is a bipartisan package and the stakes could not be higher for Southern and Eastern Oregon counties."

The following bipartisan bills* would address water shortages and drought but will not move forward unless Senate Republicans come back to work and fight for their constituents:

[HB 2813](#) Securing Clean Drinking Water

Oregon's communities need clean drinking water resources, free of contamination. This bill establishes a grant program at the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to support drinking water providers in voluntary efforts to protect, restore, and enhance sources of drinking water.

[HB 3103](#) Increasing Resiliency for Agricultural Producers

HB 3103 builds off of past drought investments and will enable Oregon State University (OSU) to track and report on drought and flood impacts to Oregon's agricultural producers over time. This bill creates an agricultural water management technical assistance program within the OSU extension program and at the Agricultural Research Centers to support research and outreach activities and help producers make the most of every drop of water. This will also help producers increase their resilience to drought and water scarcity.

[SB 85](#) Protecting Water Supply

Oregon's stock water exemption was originally intended to help small family farmers water their livestock without a special groundwater certificate or water right. Since then the Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) industry has grown astronomically and regulations on CAFO water permitting and use have not kept up. As water scarcity increases in Oregon, particularly groundwater supplies, it is critical that we ensure CAFOs are not taking advantage of the exemption and are doing their part to protect the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater supplies. SB 85 is carefully crafted to require the strictest permitting requirements for the largest CAFOs using the greatest amounts of water, while requiring all CAFOs to meet certain minimum requirements such as developing water supply plans.

[SB 455](#) Advancing Aquifer Recharge Projects

With water resources increasingly strained, recharging our aquifers is an important piece to Oregon's water management strategies. SB 455 would establish a grant program for aquifer recharge, aquifer storage, and recovery due diligence. In the face of climate change, providing water users with tools to improve water recharge and storage options is critical. Central and Eastern Oregon aquifers have been particularly strained, and our rural communities need long term tools to manage water resources for agriculture, industry, and drinking water.

[SB 956](#) Promoting Collaboration in Walla Walla River Basin

This bill promotes a cooperative roadmap for water management in the Walla Walla Basin. It instructs Water Resources Department to take certain actions related to Walla Walla Water 2050 Strategic Plan, including working with Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the State of Washington to develop a bistate water management strategic plan. The plan will consider agricultural, environmental, municipal, and industrial stakeholders.

[HB 3100](#) Enhancing Coordination on State Water Strategy

Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy is critical to identifying and addressing water needs. This bill enhances public participation and interagency coordination in the development and implementation of this important strategy.

[HB 3163](#) Engaging Oregonians in Local Water Planning

Creates a Place-Based Water Planning Fund to fund place-based integrated water resources planning efforts, which will help communities understand and meet their current and future instream and out-of-stream needs. This approach was piloted from 2015-2023 and the creation of the planning fund makes this opportunity permanent and expands the opportunity to new places.

[HB 3321](#) Addressing Vulnerabilities of Community Water Systems

Coastal and rural communities do not have the same resources and funding available as large cities do to support their water systems. HB 3321 responds by funding an assessment of the vulnerabilities of small and very small community water systems and provides resources to provide training and technical assistance to address known vulnerabilities. – small and vulnerable water systems.

HB 3231 Supporting Water Reuse and Recycling

Oregon must become more efficient with our water use. This directs the Department of Environmental Quality and Water Resources Department, to develop recommendations and other resources to expand water reuse and recycled water programs or projects in-state.

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*Some bills are included in the [Drought and Water Security Budget](#).