



Water Right Application Initial Review

September 26, 2025

BUTTER CREEK CATTLE
C/O STEVE CURRIN
60694 LITTLE BUTTER CREEK RD
HEPPNER OR 97836

Reference: Application G-19412

This document is to inform you of the preliminary analysis of the water-use permit application and to describe your options. In determining whether an application may be approved, the Water Resources Department (Department) must consider the factors listed below, all of which must be favorable to the proposed use if it is to be allowed. Based on the information supplied, the Department has made the following preliminary determinations:

Preliminary Determinations under Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 690-310-0080:

1. Application G-19412 proposes the appropriation of 2.45 cubic feet per second (CFS) of water, further limited to 657.0 acre-feet (AF) annually, being no more than 0.89 CFS and 144.0 AF annually from Well 1, 1.64 CFS and 513.0 AF annually from Well 2, and 0.22 CFS and 60.0 AF annually from Well 3 (MORR 1623), in Little Butter Creek Basin for irrigation of 219.0 acres from March 1 through October 31 of each year.
2. The proposed use is not prohibited by law or rule except where otherwise noted below.
3. Irrigation from Well 1 and Well 2 is allowed under the Umatilla Basin Program (OAR 690-507-0080(3)(c)(A)). However, irrigation from Well 3 (MORR 1623) is not allowed under the Umatilla Basin Program (OAR 690-507-0080(2)).
4. The proposed groundwater use is not within a designated critical groundwater area. OAR 690-310-0080(1)(a).

Please note: Applications are evaluated using the rules in effect at the time the application is accepted as complete. To view the rules relevant for this application, please visit: <https://secure.sos.state.or.us/oard/displayCompilations> and navigate to Chapter 690 (Water Resources Department).

5. An assessment of groundwater availability has been completed by the Department. A copy of this assessment is in the file and can be viewed on the Department's website. The Department has determined that there are insufficient data available to indicate whether the groundwater resource is over-appropriated during any period of the proposed use. Therefore, **groundwater is not available for the proposed use**. OAR 690-310-0080(1)(b); OAR 690-300-0010(57).
6. The Department has determined that the proposed groundwater use from Well 3 (MORR 1623) will have the potential for substantial interference (PSI) with Little Butter Creek. OAR 690-009-0040. Therefore, in accordance with OAR 690-300-0010(57)(a) and OAR 690-400-0010(11)(a)(B), surface water availability must be considered. During the period of use requested, surface water is not available (at an 80% exceedance probability). **Therefore, surface water is not available for the proposed use from Well 3**. OAR 690-310-0080(1)(b); OAR 690-300-0010(57); OAR 690-410-0070.
7. If properly conditioned (and if authorized), the proposed use of groundwater will not injure other water rights.
8. The proposed use is not located within or above any state or federal scenic waterway.
9. Because this application will have an impact on surface water flows where sensitive, threatened, or endangered (STE) fish species may be present, this application will be reviewed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. This review may cause your application to be limited, conditioned, or denied. Depending on the proposed use, you may be required to mitigate for potential impacts identified in the review. See the **Division 33 Review** section below for more information.
10. OAR 690-033-0120(2) prohibits the diversion of water from April 15 through September 30 each year from Well 3.
11. It appears that a portion of the requested place of use for irrigation is currently covered by an existing irrigation right, Certificate 2664. **While it is unlikely that a permit will be issued**, if the Department's findings change this issue will need to be addressed prior to the issuance of any Proposed Final Order that may recommend approval.
12. Documentation has been submitted from the relevant land-use planning jurisdiction that indicates the proposed use is allowed outright.

Summary of Preliminary Determinations
The appropriation of 2.45 CFS of water, further limited to 657.0 AF annually, being no more than 0.89 CFS and 144.0 AF annually from Well 1, 1.64 CFS and 513.0 AF annually from Well 2, and 0.22 CFS and 60.0 AF annually from Well 3 (MORR 1623), in Little Butter Creek Basin for irrigation of 219.0 acres from March 1 through October 31 of each year is not allowable.

Public Comment:

Public interest issues and/or public comments will be addressed as the Department prepares a Proposed Final Order. If significant public interest issues are identified, they could have an impact on the eventual outcome of the application.

Division 33 Review:

The Department's Division 33 administrative rules (OAR 690-033) establish additional procedures and standards to aid the Department in determining whether a proposed use will impair or be detrimental to the public interest with regard to STE fish species. This Initial Review does not address the potential impact that your proposed use may have on these species.

You may be required to mitigate for potential impacts identified in the Division 33 review process. Mitigation is often complicated, time consuming, and expensive, and may include, but is not limited to, actions such as replacing the proposed amount of water within the impacted reach through purchasing or transferring an existing water right. Following the Initial Review, you will be notified if mitigation is required due to impacts to STE fish species.

If you choose to pursue mitigation, you will likely need to place your application on administrative hold in order to explore options. There will be an additional fee of \$1,185 required with any mitigation proposal submitted.

At this time, you must decide whether to proceed or to withdraw the application.

- **To Proceed** - If you choose to proceed with the application, you do not have to notify the Department. The application will be placed on the Department's Public Notice to allow others the opportunity to comment. After the comment period the Department will complete a public interest review and issue a Proposed Final Order.
- **To Withdraw** - You may withdraw the application and fees in excess of \$465 will be returned. You must notify the Department **in writing** by **October 10, 2025**. For your convenience you may use the enclosed "STOP PROCESSING" form.

Although it is unlikely that a permit will be issued, if the Department's findings change and a permit is issued, it will likely include the following conditions:

1. Construction of the well shall begin within five years of the date of permit issuance. The deadline to begin construction may not be extended. This permit is subject to cancellation proceedings if the construction deadline to begin is missed.
2. If the number, location, source, or construction of any well deviates from that proposed in the permit application or required by permit conditions, this permit may not be valid, unless the Department authorizes the change in writing.

3. Water Use Measurement, Recording, and Reporting:

- A. Before water use may begin under this permit, the permittee shall install a totalizing flow meter at each point of appropriation. The permittee shall maintain the device in good working order.
- B. The permittee shall allow the watermaster access to the device; provided however, where any device is located within a private structure, the watermaster shall request access upon reasonable notice.
- C. The permittee shall keep a complete record of the volume of water used each month, and shall submit an annual report which includes the recorded water-use measurements to the Department annually, or more frequently as may be required by the Director. Further, the Director may require the permittee to report general water-use information, including the place and nature of use of water under the permit.
- D. The Director may provide an opportunity for the permittee to submit alternative measuring and reporting procedures for review and approval.

4. Groundwater Level Measurement, Reporting, and Shut-Off Condition:

For each well on this authorization, beginning on the permit signature date for existing wells or in the year well construction is completed for new wells, and each year thereafter, the permit holder must report a static water-level measurement ("measurement") taken in March. The measurement is required whether the well is used or not. If pumping is to commence following completion of the well and prior to the next March, then a measurement must be made at least one week following well completion and before pumping commences.

Measurements must be properly reported within 30 days of measurement using forms specified by the Department. A measurement will be properly reported if the submission includes all required information as listed in the document attached. Measurements must be made with equipment that is accurate to the standards specified in Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 690-217-0045.

Measurements must be made by a certified water rights examiner, registered professional geologist, registered professional engineer, licensed land surveyor, licensed well constructor, pump installer licensed by the Construction Contractors Board, or Department staff. The Department is not responsible for regular measurement of the static water level, but Department staff may measure the well during the normal course of groundwater level monitoring or to confirm the submitted measurement(s).

For each well on this permit, the Department will establish a reference groundwater level using the best available data. The reference level is intended to represent the highest elevation (shallowest depth) static water level that has been measured or can be reasonably estimated to have existed within each well at any time before its reference level is set. If Annual High Water Levels have been increased measurably by human activity, then the Department may set a different reference level using best available information. If the permit holder fails to measure and report the static water level within 12 months of permit issuance, or of completion of the well(s), then Department staff will estimate the static water level using available data, including measurements in surrounding

wells. In case the permit is amended or the subsequent certificate is transferred, the Department may establish a new reference level for any new or additional wells under new permits or certificates issued under this right. The reference level for a new or additional well should reflect the highest static water level in that well or, if that measurement occurred after the time represented by the original reference level, then the water level that would have been measured in that well, if the well existed and was measured at the time represented by the original reference level.

All water use authorized under this permit must immediately stop if any of the following occur:

- A. Any annual high elevation static groundwater level in any well on this permit declines 25 or more feet below the reference level for that well, or
- B. Groundwater levels are not measured and properly reported as specified above for any completed well that is authorized on the permit for two consecutive years, or
- C. Hydraulic interference contributes to a decline of 25 or more feet in any neighboring well with senior priority, at any time during the year.

The Department will determine when any of the above conditions have occurred and may order the permit holder to stop all water use under this permit. The permit holder is also responsible for stopping all water use if they become aware that any of the conditions have occurred, even without notice from the Department. Following such a stop, water use under this permit will not be allowed and may only resume once the permit holder receives notice from the Department. If the permit holder fails to stop use, then the Department may take control of the controlling works of any wells authorized under this permit and may reduce the amount of groundwater pumped until the unlawful use is eliminated.

The permit holder acknowledges that one or more of the conditions requiring stoppage of use may occur prior to any use of any well on this permit.

The Department may allow the permit holder to pause annual water level measurement and reporting requirements from some of the permitted wells if measurements from those wells are redundant with other data being collected by the Department. The permit holder must receive written notification of such an allowance before stopping measurements. If this happens, the Department may reinstate the measurement requirements at any time.

5. Groundwater production shall be allowed from no shallower than 200 feet below land surface.

6. Groundwater production shall be only from the basalt groundwater reservoir.

7. Special Groundwater Conditions:

- A. Wells shall be open to a single aquifer in the Columbia River Basalt Group and shall meet applicable well construction standards (OAR 690-200 and OAR 690-210). In addition, the open interval shall be no greater than 100 feet. However, a larger open interval may be approved by the Department if the applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Department that each well is only open to a single aquifer. Following well completion, the

well shall be thoroughly developed to remove cuttings and drilling fluids. Substantial evidence of a single aquifer completion may be collected by video log, downhole flowmeter, water chemistry and temperature, or other downhole geophysical methods approved by the Department. These methods shall characterize the nature of the basalt rock and assess whether water is moving in the borehole. Any discernable movement of water within the well bore when the well is not being pumped shall be assumed as evidence of the presence of multiple aquifers in the open interval.

- B. Drill cuttings shall be collected at 10-foot intervals and at changes in formation in the well and a split of each sampled interval shall be provided to the Department.

8. Well Identification Tag:

Prior to using water from any well listed on this permit, the permittee shall ensure that the well has been assigned an OWRD Well Identification Number (Well ID tag), which shall be permanently attached to the well. The Well ID shall be used as a reference in any correspondence regarding the well, including any reports of water use, water level, or pump test data.

The water source identified in the application may be affected by an Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plan. These plans are developed by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) with the cooperation of local landowners and other interested stakeholders, and help to ensure that current and new appropriations of water are done in a way that does not adversely harm the environment. You are encouraged to explore ODA's website at www.oregon.gov/ODA to learn more about the plans and how they may affect the proposed water use.

For Further Information:

Feel free to contact me at Nick.A.Reece@water.oregon.gov or 971-719-1058 if you have any questions regarding the contents of this letter or the application. Please include the application number in all correspondence. General questions about water rights and water use permits should be directed to our customer service staff at 503-986-0900. When corresponding by mail, please use this address: Nick Reece, Oregon Water Resources Department, 725 Summer St NE Ste A, Salem OR 97301-1266. Our fax number is 503-986-0901.

Sincerely,

Nick Reece

Nick Reece
Water Right Application Specialist
Oregon Water Resources Department

Enclosures: Application Process Description
Stop Processing Request Form

G-19412
WAB: 30710306
Proposed to Deny

APPLICATION FACT SHEET

Application File Number: G-19412

Applicant: BUTTER CREEK CATTLE

County: MORROW

Watermaster: GREGORY M. SILBERNAGEL, #5, NCR

Priority Date: JANUARY 2, 2024

Source: WELL 1, WELL 2, AND WELL 3 (MORR 1623) IN LITTLE BUTTER CREEK BASIN

Use: IRRIGATION OF 219.0 ACRES

Quantity: 2.45 CUBIC FEET PER SECOND (CFS), FURTHER LIMITED TO 657.0 ACRE-FEET (AF) ANNUALLY, BEING NO MORE THAN 0.89 CFS AND 144.0 AF ANNUALLY FROM WELL 1, 1.64 CFS AND 513.0 AF ANNUALLY FROM WELL 2, AND 0.22 CFS AND 60.0 AF ANNUALLY FROM WELL 3 (MORR 1623)

Period of Use: MARCH 1 THROUGH OCTOBER 31

Basin Name & Number: UMATILLA, #7

WAB: LITTLE BUTTER CR > BUTTER CR - AT MOUTH

Well Location(s):

POA Name	Twp	Rng	Mer	Sec	Q-Q	Measured Distances
WELL 1	2 S	28 E	WM	2	SE SE	650 FEET NORTH AND 1180 FEET WEST FROM SE CORNER, SECTION 2
WELL 2	1 S	28 E	WM	28	NW SE	1490 FEET NORTH AND 1540 FEET WEST FROM SE CORNER, SECTION 28
WELL 3 (MORR 1623)	2 S	28 E	WM	2	SE SE	20 FEET NORTH AND 315 FEET WEST FROM SE CORNER, SECTION 2

Place of Use:

Twp	Rng	Mer	Sec	Q-Q	Acres
1 S	28 E	WM	27	SW SW	11.5
1 S	28 E	WM	28	SW NE	11.0
1 S	28 E	WM	28	NE NW	15.0
1 S	28 E	WM	28	SE NW	8.0
1 S	28 E	WM	28	NW SE	20.0
1 S	28 E	WM	28	SW SE	2.5
1 S	28 E	WM	28	SE SE	14.5
1 S	28 E	WM	33	NE NE	11.5
1 S	28 E	WM	33	SE NE	1.0
1 S	28 E	WM	34	NE NW	0.5
1 S	28 E	WM	34	NW NW	25.0

Twp	Rng	Mer	Sec	Q-Q	Acres
1 S	28 E	WM	34	SW NW	21.5
1 S	28 E	WM	34	NW SW	17.0
1 S	28 E	WM	34	SW SW	9.5
1 S	28 E	WM	34	SE SW	2.5
2 S	28 E	WM	2	NE SW	12.0
2 S	28 E	WM	2	NW SE	8.5
2 S	28 E	WM	2	SW SE	9.0
2 S	28 E	WM	2	SE SE	11.5
2 S	28 E	WM	11	NE NE	7.0

PUBLIC NOTICE DATE: September 30, 2025

14 DAY STOP PROCESSING DEADLINE DATE: October 10, 2025

30 DAY COMMENT DEADLINE DATE: October 30, 2025

APPLICATION PROCESS DESCRIPTION FOR GROUNDWATER, SURFACE WATER AND REGULAR RESERVOIR APPLICATIONS

In order to use the waters of Oregon, an application must be submitted and a permit obtained from the Water Resources Department. The water must be used for beneficial purpose without waste. For more information about water right topics, weekly public notice, forms and fees please visit our website at: www.oregon.gov/owrd

1. Pre-application considerations

- Follow instructions in the application packet.
- If you have questions about completing an application or would like to arrange a pre-application conference contact the Department's Water Rights Customer Service Group at (503) 986-0900.

2. Application filing

- Application with fee is received by the Department.
- Department determines completeness of application.
- If use is not allowed by statute (ORS 538), the application and fees are returned to the applicant.
- An incomplete application and fees are returned to the applicant.
- Only a complete application receives a tentative priority date, is assigned a caseworker, and moves forward for processing.

3. Initial Review (IR)

- Caseworker reviews application by considering basin plans, water availability, statutory restrictions, and all other appropriate factors.
- Caseworker sends IR report to Applicant.
- Four days after date of the IR, it is included in Department's weekly Public Notice.
- Public comments must be submitted within 30 days after the Public Notice.

4. Proposed Final Order (PFO)

- Caseworker evaluates application against required criteria and develops draft permit, if appropriate.
- PFO includes instructions for filing of protests.
- Caseworker considers public comments and mails PFO to Applicant.
- The PFO is included in Department's weekly Public Notice.
- Public protests to the PFO must be submitted within 45 days after the Public Notice.

5. Final Order (FO)

- If no protest is filed, Final Order is issued.

The protest process

If one or more protests are filed, the process consists of:

- settlement discussion;
- contested case hearing;
- Proposed Order;
- period of time to file exceptions; or
- possible hearing by Water Resources Commission.
- Final Order is issued.

Permit holder responsibilities

- Comply with all water use conditions of the permit.
- Advise Department of address change or assignment to new permit holder.
- If need arises, request extension of time or authorize cancellation of permit.
- Submit timely claim of beneficial use (COBU) to the Department.
- Most permits require COBU to be prepared by a Certified Water Right Examiner.
- Permits may be canceled by the permit holder or by the Department for failure to comply with or one or more permit conditions.

STOP PROCESSING REQUEST FORM

FOR GROUNDWATER, SURFACE WATER AND REGULAR RESERVOIR APPLICATIONS

- Stop processing deadline is within 14 days of Initial Review.

Applicant notification to withdraw Water Right Application **G-19412**.

After reviewing the Initial Review for my application, I request that processing be stopped, and fees in excess of \$465 be returned. I understand that without a valid permit, I may not legally use the water as requested in my application.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Under ORS 537.150(5) and 537.620(5), timely submission of this request authorizes that the water right application process be stopped, and fees in excess of \$465 be returned.

- This notice must be received by the Water Resources Department no later than:

October 10, 2025

- Return the notice to:

OWRD, Water Right Services Division
STOP PROCESSING
725 Summer Street, NE - Suite A
Salem, OR 97301-1266
