

Agenda Item H – Informational Report



Groundwater Allocation Project Update

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Background

- This meeting follows previous presentations to the Commission:
 - Areas of groundwater concern
 - Groundwater hydraulics
 - History of groundwater allocation
- The Commission directed the Department to develop a groundwater allocation policy that is more sustainable and protective of senior users

Groundwater Allocation Team

- Groundwater Allocation Team
 - Cross-section of agency staff
 - Weekly work sessions
 - Call upon additional technical and policy staff as needed

Process

- Groundwater allocation issues are complex
- Groundwater availability is first issue selected
- Assessing and refining three water availability datasets:
 1. water availability reporting system (WARS)
 2. groundwater areas of concern
 3. surface water regulation history

Process

- Groundwater availability datasets are in-process
 - Preliminary overlay of data suggests little groundwater remains for new allocations
- Proposed approach meets goals of being more sustainable and protective of senior users
- Additional technical and public input is merited

Interim Process

- Staff heard Commission direction to be conservative where data are insufficient to determine water availability
- Exploring a process that prevents issuance of permits without making a positive finding of water availability
- Remains consistent with current rule and statute
- Interim process until rules are adopted in 2023

Communication Strategy

- Series of facilitated workshops
- Include external experts in hydrogeology, the public, and the Groundwater Advisory Committee
- Two to three locations around Oregon
- Present the issues and background
- Design workshops to be an information exchange and listening opportunity

GWAC Role

- Nine members appointed by WRC, at least 3 of which represent well drilling industry
- Advise WRC on rules for development, securing, use and protection of groundwater, and licensing of well constructors
- Review expenditure of start card funds

Next Steps

- Updated Timeline
 - Contract with facilitation group
 - Workshops in July – August
 - Develop rules and rule advisory committee this fall
 - Proposed adoption early 2023



Thank you.

