

OREGON



WATER RESOURCES  
DEPARTMENT

# Harney Basin Groundwater Update

Oregon Water Resources Commission

June 14, 2024

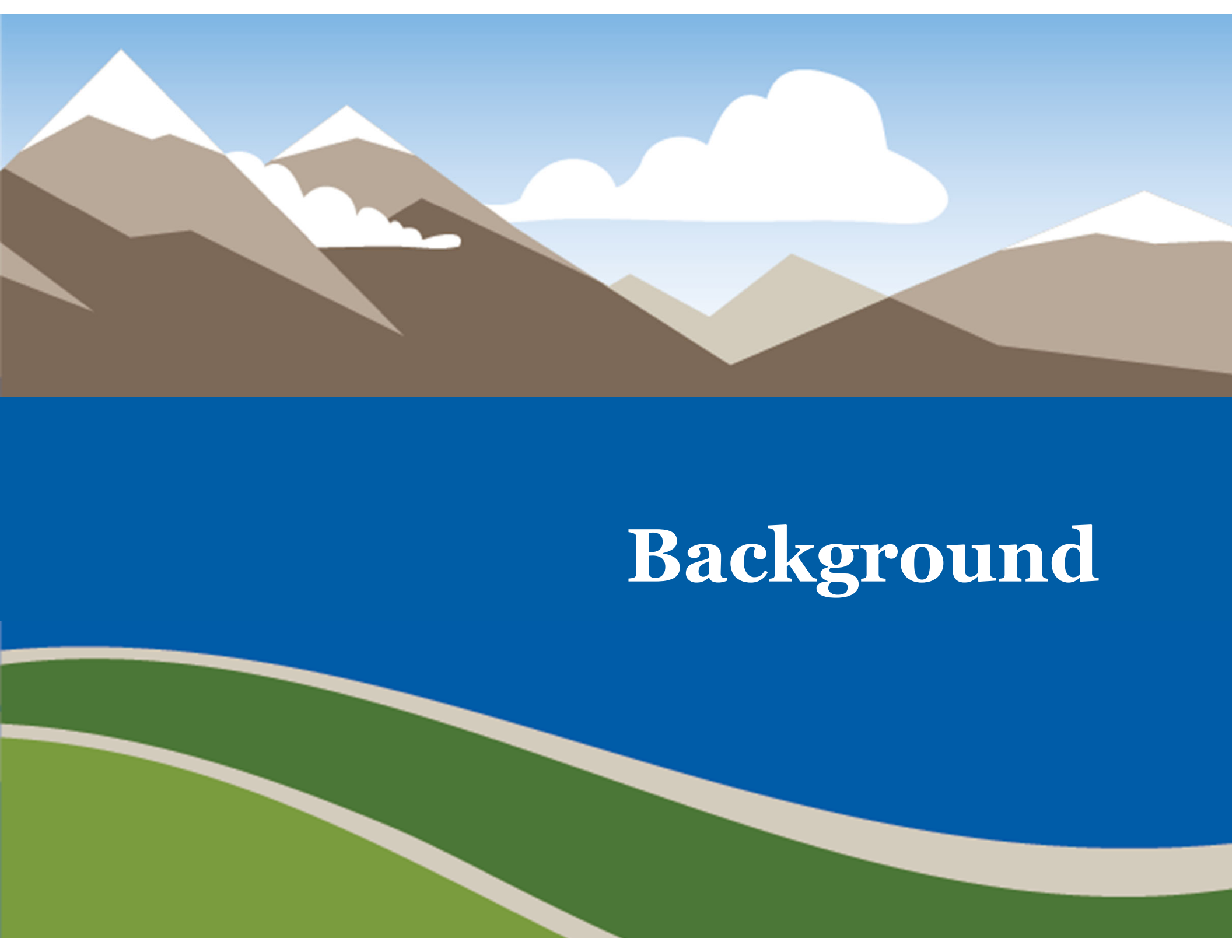
# Presentation Overview

## Topic

**Background** – Why an update to the rules?

**Groundwater Portfolio Update** – What work are we doing in the basin?

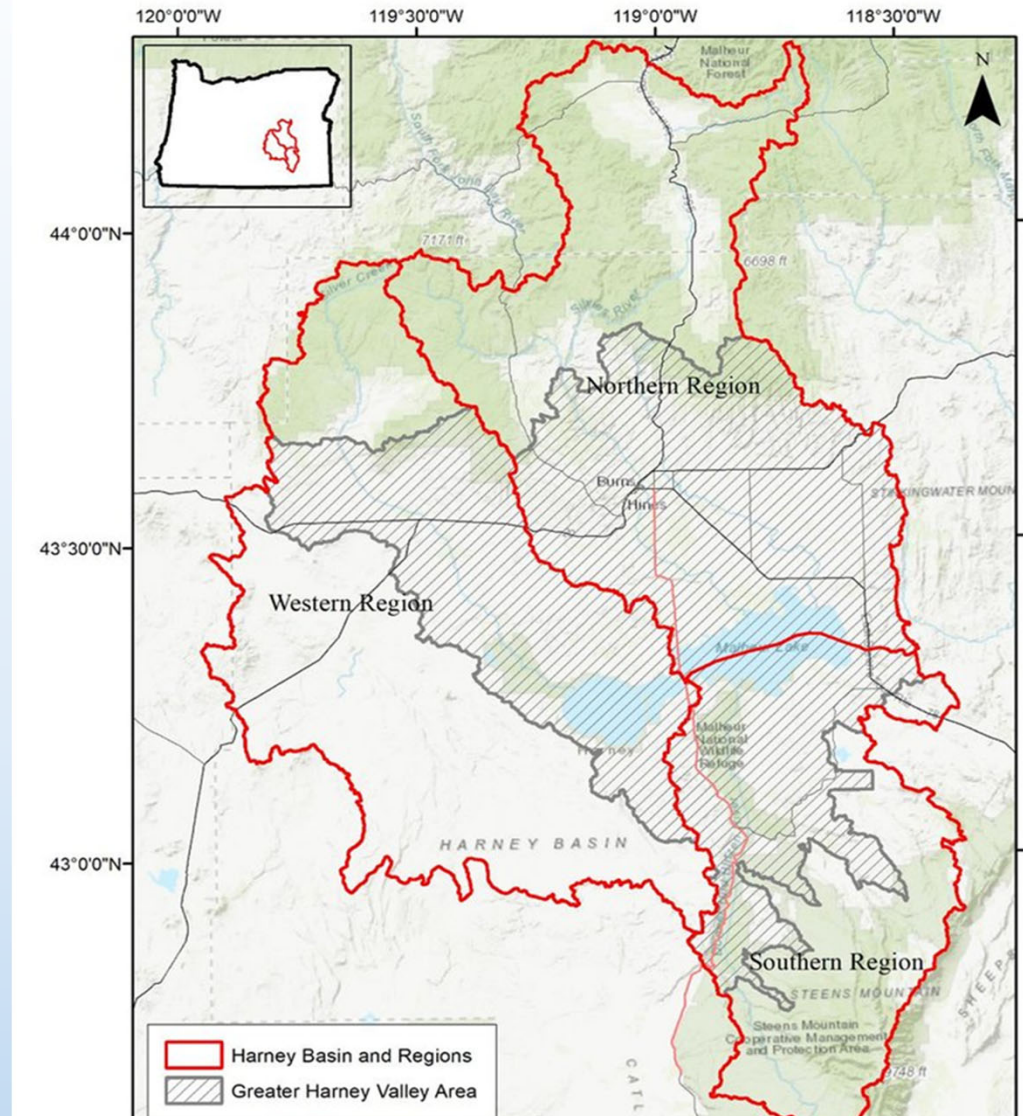
**Community Request for Comment**



# Background

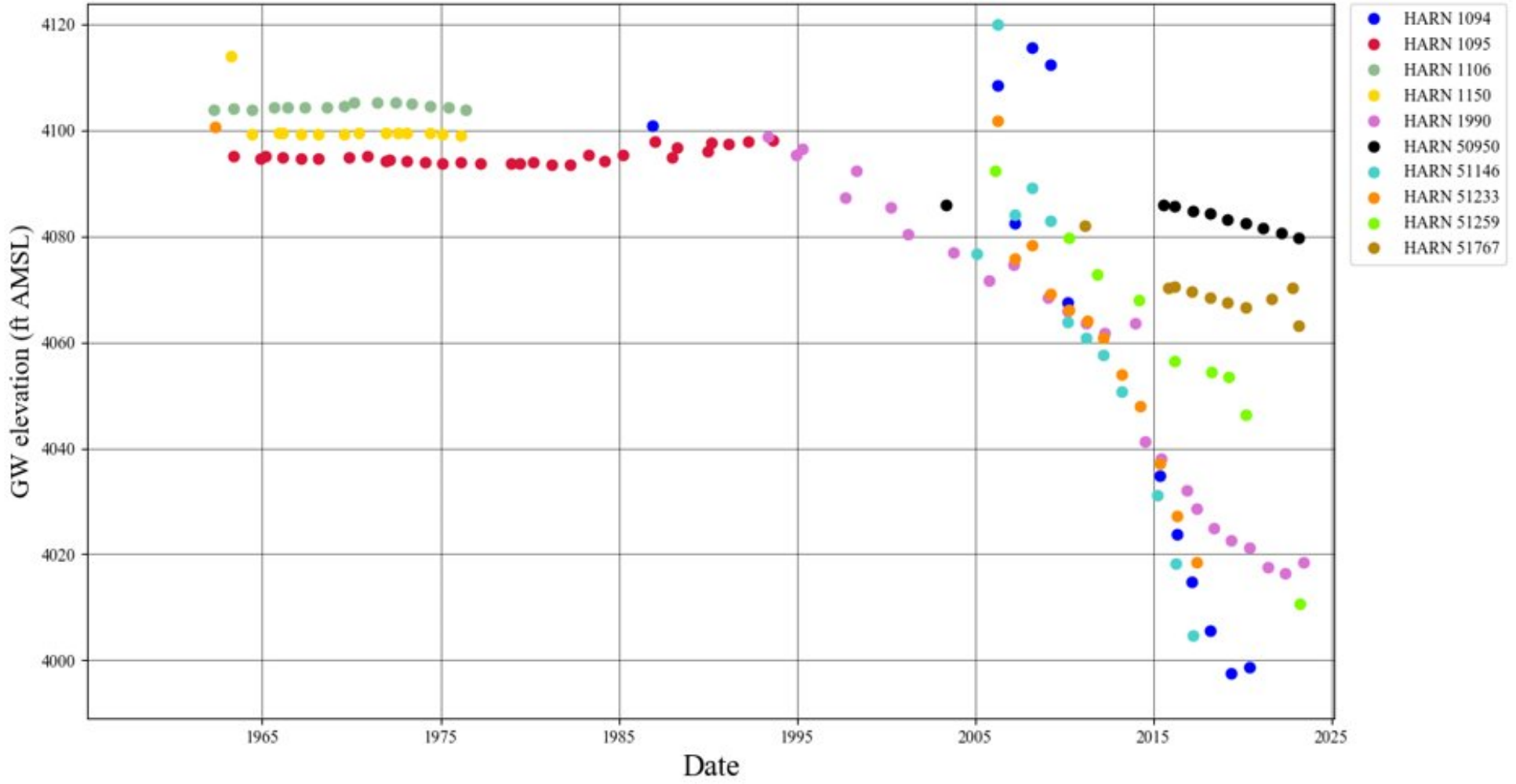
# The Harney Basin

- Located in southeastern Oregon in the Northern Great Basin
- Closed basin
- Malheur and Harney Lakes lie in the center of the basin and receive water from all the streams in the basin



# Why a rules change in 2016?

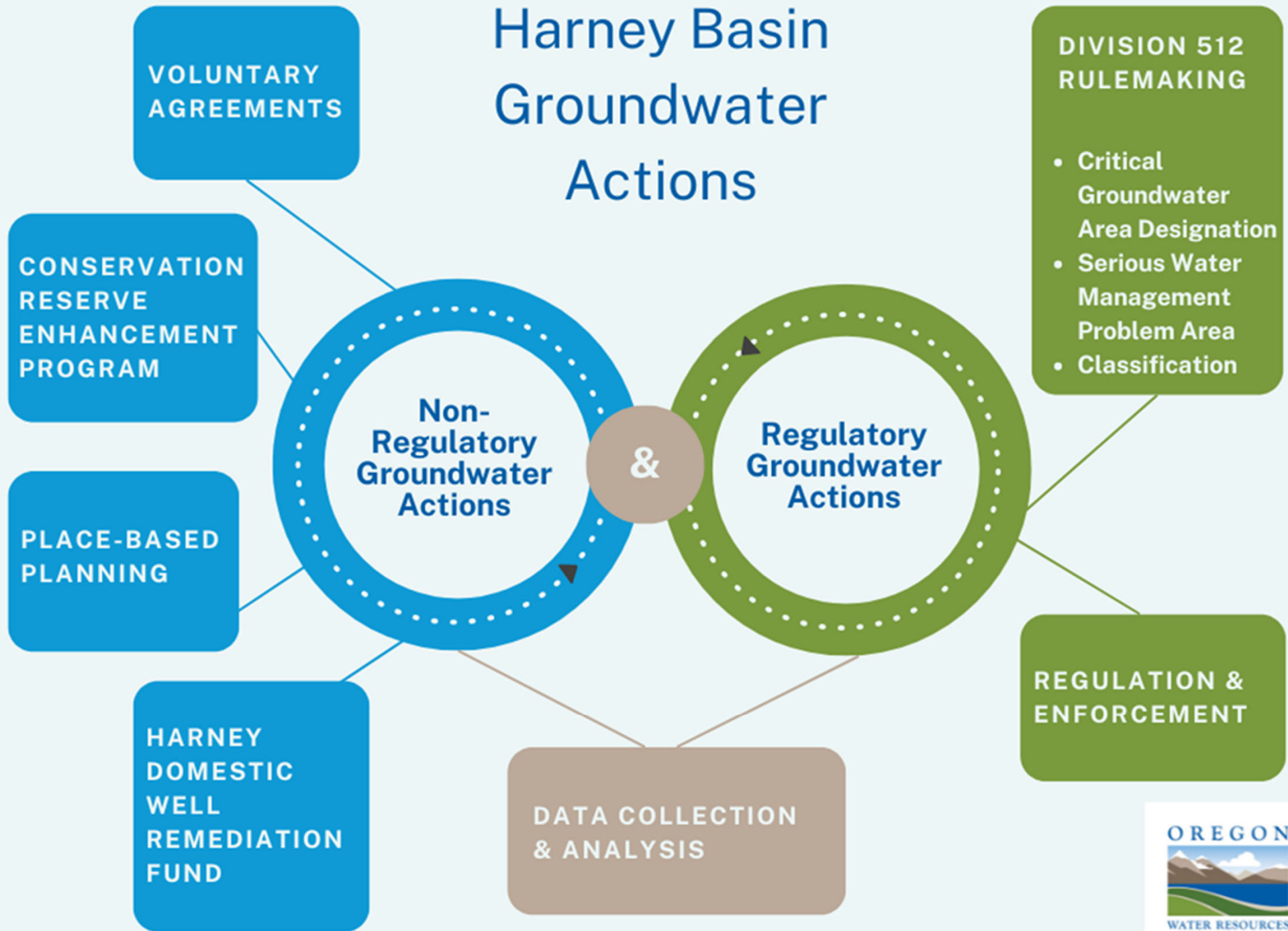
Observation Well Data



A stylized landscape illustration. The top half shows a range of mountains in shades of brown and tan, with white snow-capped peaks and white, fluffy clouds against a light blue sky. The middle section is a solid dark blue band. The bottom section shows rolling green hills with light tan outlines, suggesting a cross-section of the ground.

# Groundwater Portfolio

# Harney Basin Groundwater Actions





# Regulatory Actions



# Observation Well Network Data Collection & Analysis

- Maintain consistent and long-term static groundwater-level data sets
- Evaluate climatic, seasonal, and groundwater
- Measurements conducted quarterly



# Regulation & Enforcement

- Enforce existing permit conditions through increased monitoring
- Working to set reference levels for regulating permit decline conditions
- Continuing to monitor for and address unauthorized use
- Continuing to use OpenET data to understand water use throughout the basin

# Groundwater Control Tools

Regulatory Tool	Description	What does it manage?
<b>Classification of Water</b>	Classifies or reclassifies waters of Oregon to the highest and best use and quantities of use for the future.	Future <b>New</b> Groundwater Use
<b>Serious Water Management Problem Areas (SWMPA)</b>	Requires reporting and measurement of water use.	Measure Present and Future Groundwater Use
<b>Critical Ground Water Area Designation (CGWA)</b>	A CGWA designation allows for control of current groundwater use.	Present Groundwater Use

# What We Heard

## We heard from some RAC Members:

- Different levels of understanding around the Harney groundwater situation
- Community and Department need a plan for how to bring folks along
- Pace of rulemaking is too quick/other initiatives too slow
- Questions from the RAC have not been answered by Department
- Identify statutory requirements, policy decisions and where the RAC has influence
- Request to produce the Division 10 groundwater report
- Identify how and when the USGS model will be used

# Department's Response

## Here is how the Department responded to the RAC:

- Additional RACs being planned
- A portion of the questions have been answered and the rest will continue to be answered
- Department prepared a draft document identifying where the RAC can have input
- During the last RAC, we had a conversation around community learning opportunities
- Draft Division 10 groundwater report being published mid-June
- Work with the RAC to develop scenarios to run in the USGS model

## Future RAC Topics

- Goal for groundwater levels in the Harney Basin
- Modeled management scenarios
- Timing of implementation and allocation of the Permissible Total Withdrawal
- Allowed uses (Classification)/ Measuring and reporting
- Voluntary Agreements guidelines for Harney Basin
- Fiscal Impact Statement
- Draft rule language

### IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

**INFORM**

**CONSULT**

**INVOLVE**

**COLLABORATE**

**EMPOWER**





# Non-Regulatory Actions

# Harney Community-Based Water Planning Collaborative

- Support the planning group through technical assistance and financial support
- Groundwater portion completed in June 2023







# Harney Domestic Well Remediation Fund

- Financial assistance for replacing, repairing or deepening domestic personal use wells within the Greater Harney Valley Groundwater Area of Concern
- First grant solicitation closed May 31, 2024
- Applications under review for completeness and prioritization

# Harney Valley Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

- Landowners voluntarily cancel groundwater rights and in return are paid
- Establishes conservation land for and allows for future grazing
- Enrollment Summer 2024



# Voluntary Agreements



OWRD develops guidance/rules for Voluntary Agreements



Division 512 RAC discuss PTW and subareas and other items to encourage VAs



GW users identify scope, interest, and capacity for developing a Voluntary Agreement

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