



Harney Basin Groundwater Management Update

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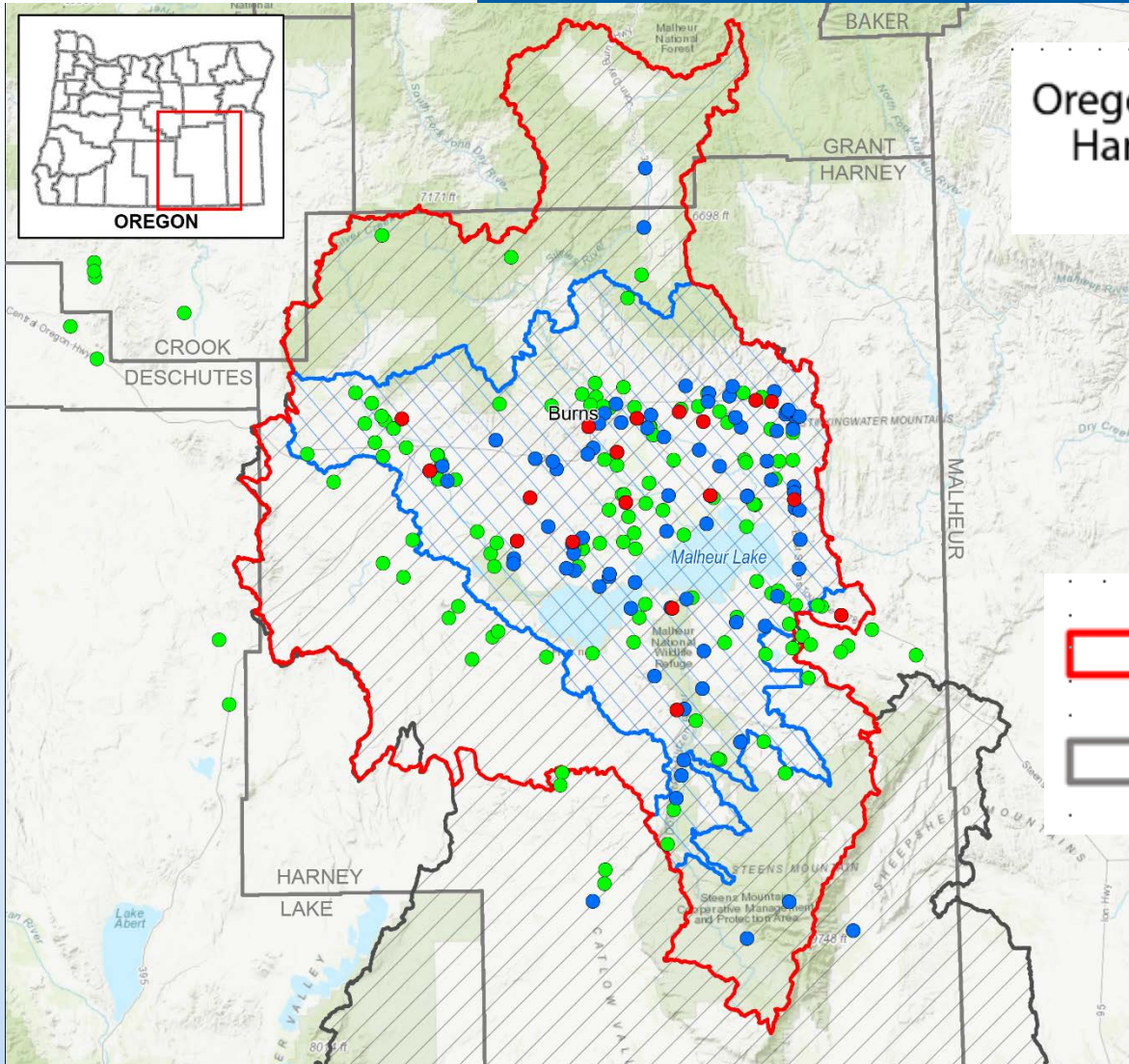
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Introduction

- One of several informational presentations providing background ahead of planned basin program rulemaking in 2021
- Preliminary study findings indicate significant water level declines in some areas
- Reduction of GW use is needed to achieve reasonably stable water levels, likely through voluntary agreements and/or critical groundwater area controls

Geographic Setting



Oregon Water Resources Department Harney Basin Groundwater Study Observation Well Network

- Recorder Wells (n=25)
- Quarterly Wells (n=109)
- Synoptic Wells (n=231)

- Harney Basin
- Greater Harney Valley Groundwater Area of Concern
- Counties
- Malheur Lake Administrative Basin

Background

- 2015 – Initial assessment indicated groundwater extraction exceeded recharge
- 2016 – Commission modified basin program rules, initiating a groundwater basin study
- Early 2020 – Basin study report is currently undergoing peer review

Anticipated Future

- Late 2020 – Study Reports Published
 - Presentation of study findings to the commission and the community
- 2021 – Convene rules advisory committee and conduct basin program rulemaking
 - Required by current basin program rules
 - Indicated by study results

Interim Work

- Executing our core functions:
 - Water Rights Processing
 - Allocation and Enforcement
 - Communication

Executing Core Functions

- Water Rights Processing and Transactions
 - Groundwater permits
 - Extensions of time
 - Claims of beneficial use
 - Transfers
- Goal: have the most accurate description of basin water rights ahead of rulemaking

Executing Core Functions

- Groundwater Distribution and Enforcement
 - Regulate-off unauthorized groundwater use
 - Enforce permit conditions
 - Enforce minimum well construction standards
 - Investigate well interference complaints
- Goal: ensure existing use is legally entitled by valid water rights ahead of rulemaking

Executing Core Functions

- Communication
 - Letters sent to permit holders
 - Press releases
 - Q&A sessions
 - Website “front page” for Harney Basin water issues – rulemaking, groundwater basin study, planning
- Goal: provide as much information as possible about expected future changes to groundwater management in the basin

Recap and Closing

- Water level declines in some areas are significant
- Reduction of GW use is needed
- Expect to be discussing basin program rule changes in 2021

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Thank you.
Questions?