

SB 6151-S.E - DIGEST

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Finds that the department of ecology adopted ground water management subarea rules to manage aquifer depletions in the Odessa subarea, which includes undeveloped portions of the federal Columbia basin project.

Finds that deep well agricultural irrigation was permitted within the Odessa subarea under the expectation that federal Columbia basin project water would be delivered to replace the temporary ground water withdrawals in time to stabilize aquifer levels.

Finds that because federal project water has not been delivered as anticipated, aquifer levels have continued to decline despite department of ecology and community efforts to manage ground water withdrawals in a sustainable manner.

Finds that, because substantial project expansion and aquifer recharge is a long-term effort, the continued availability of ground water for domestic, municipal, industrial, and agricultural uses in the region is in great jeopardy.

Declares that immediate relief is needed to encourage more efficient use of water and to protect the region's citizens from economic hardships and public health and safety risks that can result from declining aquifer levels.

Requires the department to submit a report to the legislature as to the status of the aquifer, participation in the nonuse program set forth in this act, and the outcome of the United States bureau of reclamation's study on feasible alternatives to Odessa groundwater use. This report must be submitted six months after completion of the United States bureau of reclamation's study, which is expected to be completed in February 2011. The department's report must also suggest viable solutions and the actions needed by the state to move forward with such solutions.