Kulongoski signs water storage legislation

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SB 1069 Creates Grants For Studies That Will Help Water Storage Efforts Across Oregon SALEM, Ore. â€“ Thursday Governor Ted Kulongoski signed the Agriculture and Community Water Act of 2008 (SB 1069), which establishes a statewide grant program to study water storage, reuse and conservation. The grants will help Oregon develop water storage projects that will be crucial for areas such as the Umatilla Basin, which suffer from critical water shortages. â€œSenate Bill 1069 is an important first step in meeting the need for water in the Umatilla Basin,â€• Governor Ted Kulongoski said. â€œFurther, it sets us on a course in which we begin to address water storages throughout Oregon â€“ shortages that are the legacy of overuse, and even more worrisome, the single greatest consequence of global warming.â€• Senate Bill 1069 directs $1.75 million in feasibility study grants for communities across the state â€“ making it the first statewide effort to solve critical water shortages threatening so many communities. It also provides $750,000 for a project called the Umatilla Basin Aquifer Recovery project. In this project, the Water Resources Department will conduct a detailed aquifer recharge feasibility study in the Umatilla Basin. The study will investigate and test potential for diverting surface water when itâ€™s available during the winter months, and delivering that water for storage in below-ground aquifers for use during the irrigation season. â€œNobody has to tell the people in the Umatilla Basin how important water storage is to our future,â€• said Governor Kulongoski. â€œWater is crucial to the people in this region and that is why we are targeting resources to this area.â€• The Umatilla Basin Aquifer Recovery project will investigate the potential for withdrawing surface water from the Columbia and Umatilla Rivers when itâ€™s available during the winter months, and delivering that water for storage in below-ground aquifers for use during the irrigation season. The project will identify any already-existing infrastructure, as well new infrastructure, necessary for implementation. The project will actually pilot test potential underground storage sites. â€œWhile I applaud the work weâ€™ve accomplished so far, I want to emphasize that this is only a first step,â€• continued the Governor. â€œThe next steps will be determined by the study and will require that we continue to work together across diverse interests, just as we did to make this first step a reality.â€• After the bill signing, the Governor toured the Echo Meadows water storage project outside of Hermiston. The project is testing the ability to recharge an aquifer by diverting water from the Umatilla River to the meadow. The aquifer is then recharging nearby wells and will also aid in summer water flows into the lower Umatilla River. The project is an example of the kind of water storage effort that could be developed with the new grants in Senate Bill 1069.