

Section 302(64) \$400,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 is provided solely for the department to develop a groundwater modeling guidance publication.

(a) The publication must provide consistency in the department's evaluation of groundwater models submitted for water right permitting actions and ensure continued transparency to water right applicants in the department's permitting processes. The core purpose of the publication is to establish best practices for groundwater modeling. The publication will:

- (i) Define criteria for evaluating model suitability for proposed projects;
- (ii) Identify the department's approach to evaluating model error and uncertainty;
- (iii) Identify circumstances where model outputs are insufficient for permit decision making; and
- (iv) Address the appropriateness of refining a regional groundwater model in water right permitting decisions.

(b) The department must convene a technical advisory committee of licensed hydrogeologists, including hydrogeologists employed or designated by tribes, or professional engineers with experience in groundwater modeling to review the workplan and provide comments on the guidance. The publication must be peer reviewed by the United States geological survey or other state or national hydrogeologic professional organization.

(c) The department must invite any federally recognized Indian tribes that may be potentially affected by the publication to participate in the technical advisory committee and engage in consultation with any federally recognized Indian tribe as requested.

(d) The department must provide an update to the appropriate committees of the legislature and to the office of financial management by June 30, 2025. The department must indicate the estimated time to complete the publication, including draft guidance, recommended further research, and key implementation steps in the update.