

Developing the Proposed Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation



OREGON WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT BOARD Proposed Direction for OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation

DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

OWEB invites public feedback and discussion on its proposed direction for the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation. OWEB's Board will consider public input prior to making a decision, currently planned for the June 2013 Board meeting. For more information, please visit our website www.oregon.gov/OWEB.

Guiding Principles

for the development and implementation of the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation

1. Build on accomplishments

OWEB values the commitment and work of our local partners, which has resulted in a nationally and internationally recognized approach with unmatched environmental accomplishments. OWEB wishes to build on this foundation while working toward the future.

2. Effective communication

OWEB realizes that successful cooperative conservation can only occur when ideas, priorities and results are communicated with all partners and potential partners. OWEB is committed to active, two-way communication with its staff, partners and the public as a means for developing and maintaining a strong investment strategy.

3. Transparency

OWEB values transparency and develops its Long-Term Investment Strategy through an open, transparent process that involves input and dialogue with stakeholders and staff.

4. Maximize service, minimize disruption

In developing the Long-Term Investment Strategy, the Board considers how OWEB's grant portfolio impacts partner organizations and staff resources to maximize effectiveness without adversely affecting service delivery.

5. Responsive

The Long-Term Investment Strategy will adjust to changes in revenue and be responsive to changes in ecological priorities from the Governor, Legislature, the Board and local partners.

6. Adapt based on monitoring and evaluation

OWEB's staff and Board monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of the Long-Term Investment Strategy to assure it is meeting the Board's desired goals and outcomes. As needed, the Board shall adapt and modify the strategy to improve overall investment success.

7. Phase-in Change

OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy will guide us in our future efforts and will be periodically revisited. It is designed to implement any changes over a reasonable period necessary to phase-in any changes and allow adjustment by stakeholders and OWEB staff.

Background

Mission

To help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies.

About Us

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is a state agency that provides grants to help Oregonians take care of local streams, rivers, wetlands and natural areas. Community members and landowners use scientific criteria to decide jointly what needs to be done to conserve and improve rivers and natural habitat in the places where they live. OWEB grants are funded from the Oregon Lottery, federal dollars and salmon license plate revenue. The agency is led by a 17 member citizen board drawn from the public at large, tribes and federal and state natural resource agency boards and commissions.

What is the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation?

The purpose of the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation is to identify how OWEB desires to structure its grant portfolio to achieve its mission, priorities and ecological outcomes.

Please refer to pages 3 and 4 for more information about the proposal.

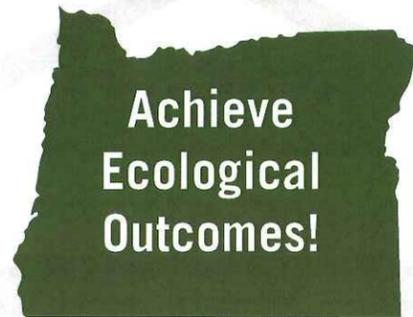
Why a Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation?

With the passage of Measure 76, the time is right for OWEB to evaluate our course and seek ways to improve. Until recently, it was unclear whether OWEB's principle source of funding would be available after 2014. Permanent funding under Measure 76 creates the opportunity to look long-term.

The investment strategy will guide the Board's programs and granting decisions.

Framework for Grant Investments

The Three Pillars



All of OWEB's investments in ecological outcomes have helped build communities and support the local economy. The draft investment strategy is based on the three key pillars which have been the foundation of OWEB's investments as described below.

Operating Capacity Investments

These grants

- Support the operating costs of effective watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts.
- Are performance and outcome-based.
- Contain high standards for eligibility, reporting and accountability.

Reason for this investment

Councils and districts are identified specifically in OWEB's statutes because they are essential leaders in the development and implementation of voluntary collaborative conservation projects to protect native fish and wildlife habitat, watersheds and water quality.

Currently:

Watershed councils are locally established voluntary organizations; OWEB may provide grants for council operating capacity.

Soil and water conservation districts are local government entities overseen by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). District operating capacity grants are administered by ODA, but funded with OWEB dollars.

Open Solicitation Investments

These grants

- Respond to locally selected ecological priorities based on local, state, and regional conservation strategies and plans.
- Are competitive.
- Are offered in regular cycles with ongoing availability across the state.

Reason for this investment

- Encourage a statewide culture of voluntary, collaborative conservation.
- Support a wide variety of ecological outcomes in all parts of the state.

Currently include:

- Regular Grants (Restoration, Land and Water Acquisition, Technical Assistance, Monitoring, Outreach, Watershed Assessment)
- Small Grants
- ODA Weed Grants
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- CREP Technical Assistance

Focused Investments

These grants

- Support collaboratively prioritized ecological outcomes selected by the OWEB Board.
- Are outcome-based and outcome-measured.
- Commit funding for multiple years.
- Move around the state as ecological priorities and leveraging opportunities intersect.

Reason for this investment

- Provide greater certainty for OWEB and partners in making progress toward collaboratively identified and prioritized ecological outcomes.
- Better leveraging of private, federal and other state/local funding for a longer, more sustained time frame.

Currently include:

- Ecosystem Services
- Effectiveness Monitoring
- Research
- Special Investment Partnerships
- Whole Watersheds Restoration Initiative

Proposal for OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation

Operating Capacity Investments

Continue this investment area.

Proposed changes

- OWEB is updating its council capacity grant program, and plans to propose changes for Board decision in 2014.
- ODA is revising its grant administration for the soil and water conservation districts.

Reason for proposal

Continue to hold grantees to high standards of effectiveness with the expectation of continual improvement.

Open Solicitation Investments

Continue this investment area.

Proposed changes

- **Small grants:** increase funding and expand types of grants beyond restoration (for example, outreach and monitoring small grants).
- **Regular restoration grants:** caps on individual applications as a way to fund more projects across the state.
- Develop a new process for "**big ticket, large cost**" restoration projects.
- Develop an **outreach grant strategy**, including partnering with other outreach funders to leverage additional investment.

Reason for proposal

Maintain or expand the grant opportunities for local projects, even if the amount of funding for Open Solicitation Investments does not increase, or is reduced over time.

Focused Investments

Continue this investment area.

Proposed changes

- Phase-in a gradual **increase in this investment area over time**.
- Develop criteria and process for Board selection of collaboratively prioritized ecological outcomes.
- Update criteria and process and improve transparency of Board decisions around Focused Investments, including clear time limits.

Reason for proposal

With committed funding over multiple years, Focused Investments provide greater certainty for OWEB and partners in making progress toward collaboratively prioritized ecological outcomes. The increased state emphasis on 10-year outcomes makes it important for OWEB to invest in more certain progress, and to develop clear criteria and process for prioritized ecological outcomes.

Potential Benefits & Consequences of OWEB's Proposed Direction

While OWEB's funding now has long-term status, grant funds will vary over time and will be affected by state and federal budget decisions.

Depending on funding availability, increases in investments in one area may have impact on other areas of investment.

OWEB is interested in your thoughts on the benefits and consequences of these proposed changes.

Investment in the following areas provides support and accountability to the above:

Competitive Offering for Emerging Issues

New grant offering.

- Develop criteria, structure and process.
- Consider activities appropriate for one-time/short term funding that are consistent with OWEB's mission, but do not qualify under OWEB's other grant programs.
- Examples include conservation efforts that require short-term assistance for planning or research, and pilot funding for innovative approaches to natural resources management.

Reason for proposal:

OWEB has invested in emerging issues in the past. It is important to have clear structure, criteria and process to guide decisions on funding requests.

Focused Effectiveness Monitoring & Reporting

Continue to conduct board-directed effectiveness monitoring for selected types of Open Solicitation grants.

Proposed change

- Include effectiveness monitoring in all of OWEB's Focused Investments.

Reason for proposal

Outcomes are foundational to sound investments and adaptive management. It is important to tell the story of accomplishments from OWEB's investments.

Contact Us

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