

Bend Session Overview – May 9, 2012

Note: the following information is offered for the Board to consider as it develops its Long Term Investment Strategy.

Long-Term Investment Strategy Comments

In Bend, many participants encouraged OWEB to focus their goals and strategies on restoration of ecosystem functions. Uplands and aquatic systems are both important aspects to the ecosystem approach. Some also recommend assisting local organizations develop regional solutions rather than solely doing worthwhile projects. Planning tools, local capacity, and funding are current obstacles to the implementation of innovative ideas for regional water management plans that could forge long-term partnerships and leverage more local funding.

Another frequent message was that OWEB should develop state and regional priorities that align with conservation strategies such as the Oregon Conservation Strategy and work with local watersheds to develop basin-specific priorities. Quantifiable outcomes should be established for local groups to use in developing local strategies.

Numerous participants stated that OWEB should invest more in building and maintaining capacity in local watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts, collaboratives, and other local organizations. OWEB should assist in setting up networks for sharing expertise, providing technical consultations, and accessing other key resources that would enhance local capacity.

Monitoring was a point of emphasis. Comments call for more monitoring for which statistical rigor is reasonably attainable. Effectiveness and implementation monitoring are both important. OWEB should develop shared databases and offer funding for data analysis.

There is strong support from many participants for continued and more education and outreach. They believe it is important to tell the story of OWEB and the work of the many Oregonians engaged in watershed protection.

Additional Advice

Several comments emphasize that all areas in the state have their own unique set of needs, strengths, and capacities. OWEB should work with regions and local areas to match programs with local situations. There was also the call for making funds available for ongoing maintenance and stewardship of watershed work and for dealing with emergencies that may arise between grant cycles. Several asked OWEB to help local organizations build collaboration among the many participants in watershed protection.

Wrap-Up

OWEB Director Tom Byler, and board members Doug Krahmer and Karl Wenner highlighted that they had heard a lot of discussion requesting that OWEB provide targets, priorities, and outcomes to aspire to but not to lose connection with local innovators and experts. There needs to be a balance. Also there is a call for more funding for monitoring and outreach and a need to support local capacity building.