



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360

Salem, OR 97301-1290

(503) 986-0178

FAX (503) 986-0199

www.oregon.gov/OWEB



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Renee Davis-Born, Data Analyst and Information Specialist
Greg Sieglitz, Monitoring and Reporting Program Manager

**SUBJECT: Agenda Item K2: Wetland Investments
September 16-17, 2008 OWEB Board Meeting**

I. Introduction

This item provides an update about two wetlands related activities of importance to OWEB. The first part of the report is a progress update on the digitization of National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps. The second portion of this report is a status update about the monitoring and assessment effort for wetlands projects that was recently provided to the agency through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The report also seeks Board authorization to delegate authority to the Director to enter into contracts with the Oregon Department of State Lands and The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation (Xerces) associated with the EPA-funded project.

II. Digitization of National Wetlands Inventory Maps

As reported at the March and May Board meetings significant progress has been made in recent years toward building an electronic map of all wetlands located in the state. When completed, this map, based on data from the NWI, will be readily available to local restoration groups and interested parties such as state and federal agencies responsible for the management of wetlands.

Since May of this year, Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE), the agency with which OWEB is contracting, has initiated digitization work and has completed transfer of 101 maps. In August of 2008, OCE added another technician to this project in order to meet the September 2008 timeline for delivering all 240 digital NWI maps to OWEB as required under the funding agreement between OWEB and the Oregon Department of Administrative Services, which awarded \$48,000 for this work. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) NWI staff will complete final quality assurance and quality control work on these products. Upon completion of this contract, high-quality digital NWI maps will be available for nearly 70 percent of Oregon's land area. The maps will be available on the USFWS's NWI website found at:
<http://wetlandfws.er.usgs.gov/nwi/index.html>

At the May Board meeting, the Board allocated \$96,200 in non-capital funding and delegated authority to the Director to enter into a contract with OCE to complete digitization of the

remaining 481 NWI maps that cover southeastern Oregon. This digitizing of NWI maps is planned to commence by the September 2008 Board meeting.

These products, in conjunction with deliverables from an initiative by The Wetlands Conservancy to revise 97 outdated NWI maps in western Oregon, will result in a comprehensive statewide coverage of wetland location information in electronic format that is easily accessible to watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, landowners, agencies, and other entities for Oregon. The anticipated date the complete map will be available is September of 2009.

III. Compliance and Effectiveness Monitoring of Wetlands Projects

On May 2, 2008, the EPA announced funding decisions for its 2008 Wetlands Program Development Grants. OWEB, along with DSL and Xerces, was awarded \$342,281 to create the framework for an Oregon Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program.

OWEB has provided nearly \$10 million to wetland restoration projects around the state between 1999 and 2008. At present, this is the sixth largest investment in restoration activity of all project types undertaken using Measure 66 funds. The trend has shown an increasing number of watershed councils planning wetland restoration projects. At the same time, DSL provides permits for approximately 200 wetland mitigation projects each year, and half of these include enhancement actions as well. Despite this number of wetland related activity, no comprehensive strategy currently exists to assess the success of wetland restoration, mitigation, and enhancement projects in Oregon.

To address this need, OWEB, DSL, and Xerces will develop a framework for assessing and monitoring Oregon wetlands to provide guidance to groups involved in wetland restoration and mitigation. The project will test a preliminary invertebrate-based biological monitoring tool and apply the Oregon Wetland Assessment Protocol, known as ORWAP. A portion of the project will also develop detailed effectiveness monitoring to assess wetland quality and evaluate restoration and mitigation success. In addition, the project will improve the quality and management of data on mitigation and restoration sites and increase information exchange to improve decision-making about wetland enhancement and investments. Project implementation will occur initially in the Willamette Valley, which is intended to complement and inform investments that will be made by OWEB under the Willamette Special Investment Partnership.

The compliance and effectiveness monitoring framework resulting from the project will be used by OWEB to assess wetland restoration projects located around the state in coming years. The project will also inform the development of guidelines for future wetland restoration and mitigation practices thereby augmenting the effectiveness of restoration projects and enhancing the compliance with Oregon's compensatory wetland mitigation projects.

Representatives from the three partner organizations held a preliminary project meeting in early July. Also in July, OWEB staff initiated discussions with researchers from EPA's Western Ecology Division about organizing a design workshop for restoration effectiveness monitoring for wetlands in the fall of 2008 that will inform sampling design for the OWEB-DSL-Xerces project. Finally, staff are exploring opportunities for collaboration with The Wetlands Conservancy and the OSU Institute for Natural Resources, which also were funded by EPA in a related Wetland Program Development grant.

As the grant recipient, OWEB staff currently are working with EPA Region 10 to develop the grant agreement for this award. Subsequent to the award, OWEB staff wish to enter into interagency and grant agreements with both DSL and Xerces for their work on this project.

IV. Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Board delegate authority to the Director to enter into agreements with the Oregon Department of State Lands and The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation to complete mapping and monitoring activities, respectively, associated with the EPA-funded project.