

January 21-22, 2009 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #D1: Biennial Conference Recap

Background

OWEB's 10th Biennial Conference was held November 5-7, 2008, at the Eugene Hilton Hotel and Conference Center. The conference was titled *Working for Healthy Watersheds: Climate Change and Watershed Resilience* and the conference was organized around the theme of climate change.

Highlights

The conference was initiated by a keynote address by Secretary of State Bill Bradbury and a presentation of the Roger Wood Memorial award to him for his efforts on behalf of the environment of Oregon. The plenary and first breakout sessions focused on linkages between climate change and watershed health, watershed management, and restoration. The conference organizers also attempted to challenge the speakers to link community organization and resilience to the ability to adapt to climate change. Conference organizers worked with speakers to develop more integrated talks and to use adult learning techniques.

Beyond the keynote speakers, highlights from the Conference included the Thursday lunch speaker, Julie Daniel of BRING Recycling, and the Banquet speaker Chad Pregracke.

Conference Evaluation

Participants at every session were provided with evaluation forms at the end of each session. Staff attempted to obtain a high percentage feedback from session participants. A summary of the detailed conference evaluation summary is attached. (Attachment A) In general, the conference attendees indicated a relatively strong agreement that the climate change sessions were informative, but there was somewhat less agreement that the information would help them in their restoration work.

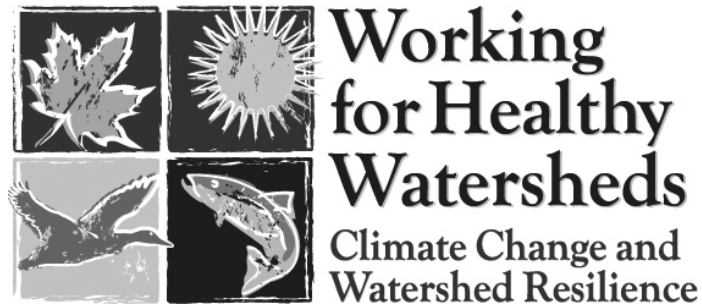
Overall, participants most highly rated the opportunity to network. The reviews of each panel session were strongly positive. Only two speakers were poorly reviewed out of more than 65 presenters. OWEB has posted the power point presentations from the conference on our website to make them available for download.

The only significant comments about future organization of the conference were to allow for more time and more depth for session topics. This would mean fewer session options, but could be considered for the next conference. The use of online materials and conference review seemed to work well. The difficulties at the registration table will be avoided next time.

The presence of Board members at the conference was valuable to both staff and conference attendees. Conference fundraising was successful with the Oregon Lottery providing major support with additional significant sponsorships from the Bureau of Land Management and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. Attachment B lists the conference sponsors.

Staff Contact

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Ken Bierly, at ken.bierly@state.or.us or 503-986-0182.



CONFERENCE EVALUATION SUMMARY

The following is based on receipt of approximately 150 responses. Surveys were distributed electronically the week after the conference, resulting in more than twice the number received in 2006 when the survey was conducted by paper at the conference..

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

Respondents gave the highest score to “I strengthened my network” with strong scores for the first two questions regarding increased awareness and understanding of climate change. Most said they were motivated to implement at least two ideas to increase awareness of and participation in community watershed programs.

Please indicate how well you agree with the following statements:

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

Rating

Average

3.73 My understanding of the effect climate change will have on watershed restoration priorities has been broadened because of the conference.

3.71 I have a greater awareness of the role and opportunities local restoration and conservation projects have in helping watershed functions adapt to climate change because of the conference.?

3.45 I gained useful tools that I will employ in the design and implementation of future projects in response to and in anticipation of changes in the climate because of this conference.

4.31 During the conference, I strengthened my network of professional contacts.

3.42 Because of the conference, I am more skilled in planning and managing on-the-ground projects.

3.68 I gained practical tips for becoming more effective in my day-to-day work.

I am motivated to implement at least __ ideas to increase awareness of and participation in community watershed enhancement programs due to this conference.

0 = 5%, 1 = 24%, 2 = 32%, 3 = 23%, 4 = 7%, 5 = 8%

CONFERENCE MATERIALS, LOGISTICS

People rated conference organization and location/facilities highly. Scores were very similar to responses to the same questions in 2006 with the exception of lower ratings in 2008 for registration procedure and field trips.

Rate the following 5 = excellent, 4 = above average, 3 = good, 2 = poor, 1 = cannot judge

3.28 Overall quality of the pre-conference promotional materials.

3.62 General conference information received at the conference.

3.23 Handouts received at conference workshops.

3.44 Quality of the exhibits.

3.02 Quality of the posters.

3.93 Overall organization of the conference.

3.98 Conference location and meeting facilities.

3.32 Conference registration procedure.

3.53 Quality of the food and snacks.

2.58 Quality of the field trips.

FEATURED SPEAKERS

All were rated highly with Daniel and Pregracke leading.

How would you rate our featured speakers:

3.85 Secretary of State Bill Bradbury (Wednesday lunch keynote speaker)

3.30 Russ Hoeflich, The Nature Conservancy (Wednesday lunch speaker)

3.27 Dr. Tim Beechie, NOAA Fisheries (Wednesday lunch speaker)

4.32 Julie Daniel, BRING Recycling (Thursday lunch speaker)

4.90 Chad Pregracke, Living Lands and Waters (Thursday banquet speaker) (NOTE: recalculated to discount people not responding who did not attend banquet.)

NEW FEATURES

Many people did not participate in some of the features aimed at particular audiences. Therefore, most scores are not indicative of overall satisfaction. People strongly supported electronic distribution of conference materials.

Please rate the effectiveness of new features of this year's event:

5 = extremely useful, 4 = very useful, 3 = useful, 2 = not useful, 1 = cannot judge

3.57 Efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the conference (recycling, promotion of carpooling, purchase of offset credits).

1.68 Offering longer pre-conference workshops.

3.04 Concentrating on the theme of climate change for all Wednesday sessions.

2.39 Packaging workshops for citizen council members and board members Thursday afternoon.

2.75 Friday morning wrap-up sessions providing summaries of workshops and allowing discussion of issues and concerns.

3.90 Detailed information about the conference and workshop descriptions, objectives and speakers posted on the Web rather than mailed.

Did you use public transportation or share a ride for travel to or from the conference?

49% Yes

51% No

How did you hear about the conference?

79% Through a direct message by e-mail or surface mail from OWEB.

31% Through a message from a group or organization.

2% News media announcement.

 Other: Please specify: _____

How would you describe what it is you do? (please check all that apply)

38% Administrator/manager

14% Board member

17% Consultant

30% Education/outreach coordinator

38% Restoration project manager

28% Scientist

3% Teacher

16% Volunteer

TRACK COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

Track: Engaging the Community

- Make the results of research available
- Increase funding for education and outreach
- OWEB should work with Oregon Department of Education on watershed education
- Create a forum for council-swcd staff to work together
- Secure funding for the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
- Provide regular training on conflict communication

Track: Invasive Species

- Funding for early detection and rapid response
- Support a “Bullfrog fishing day” for Fathers Day to focus on involving youth
- Improve coordination among government agencies
- Develop Legislative tools

Track: Building Effective Organizations

- Need templates for watershed council policy (personnel and contraction esp.)
- Need watershed council strategic planning time and fiscal management training

Track: Making Projects Work

- Improve information sharing about projects and lessons learned
- Develop a “Private Landowner Manual” or tips on working with people
- Develop a common template for describing common project types for grant applications and reporting

Future Conference Suggestions

- Consider “Green Infrastructure” as a theme
- Provide training on how to use LIDAR
- Have sessions on developing new funding sources
- Create an opportunity to talk with grant application review team members
- Have more time for peer-to-peer interaction
- Have fewer concurrent sessions

Attachment B

Organization
BASIN \$5,000+
Oregon Lottery
SUBBASIN \$5,000-9,999
USDI - Bureau of Land Management
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
WATERSHED \$1500-4,999
National Marine Fisheries Service
Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation
Oregon Trout
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
Eugene Water & Electric Board
US Environmental Protection Agency
STREAM \$500-1,499
OSU Extension Service
River Network
Lone Rock Timber
West Consultants
OR Dept. of Forestry
Watershed Professionals Network
US Fish & Wildlife Service
Environmental Professional Program, PSU
Metro - Nature in Neighborhoods
ESA Adolfson
Inter-Fluve, Inc.
REACH <\$500
Amity Vineyards
Bethel Heights Vineyard
Bonneville Environment Foundation
Ponzi Vineyard
Good Company
Oakshire Brewing
Technical Assistance for Community Services (TACS)
Wednesday Reception
The Nature Conservancy
Thursday Reception
Oregon Dept. of Geology

Total Contribution = \$45,250.00