

January 21-22, 2009 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #D7: Wetlands Investment Update

Background

This item provides an update about two wetland related initiatives undertaken recently by OWEB's Monitoring and Reporting Program. 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 enhanced through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Digitization of National Wetlands Inventory Maps

As reported at the September Board meeting, significant progress has been made in recent years toward building an electronic map of all wetlands located in the state. When completed, this map will be readily available to local restoration groups and interested parties such as state and federal agencies responsible for the management of wetlands. The basis for the map is the NWI maps, which are being digitized under this project.

In October 2008, Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE) completed the digitization of 242 NWI maps 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 are conducting quality assurance and quality control review of these products, and anticipate making them available on the USFWS's NWI website (www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/index.html) by early 2009.

OCE is currently digitizing 481 NWI maps that cover southeastern Oregon with \$96,200 in non-capital funding allocated by the Board at the May 2008 meeting. At the time of this report, over one-third of the maps are digitized. The estimated timeframe for completion of this work has been accelerated to May of 2009. These maps, in conjunction with deliverables from an initiative by The Wetlands Conservancy to revise 97 outdated NWI maps in western Oregon, will result in a comprehensive statewide GIS coverage comprised of wetland location information in an electronic format that is easily accessible to watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, landowners, agencies, and other entities in Oregon. The anticipated date these wetland maps will be available is September of 2009.

Compliance and Effectiveness Monitoring of Wetlands Projects

OWEB was awarded \$342,281 by EPA to create the framework for an Oregon Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program in September of 2008. The two-year project is intended to make initial progress toward a comprehensive wetland monitoring strategy by applying the Oregon Rapid Wetland Assessment Protocol (ORWAP), developing detailed effectiveness monitoring to assess wetland quality, testing a preliminary invertebrate-based biological monitoring tool, improving the quality and management of data on wetland mitigation and restoration sites, and increasing 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.

Since the update provided at the September Board meeting, project partners have made substantial progress in several areas. Staff finalized a grant agreement with EPA Region 10 for this award. OWEB entered into an interagency agreement with the Oregon Department of State Lands and developed a non-competitive grant agreement with The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation for their work on this project.

In late October, representatives from the three partner organizations held a project planning meeting to set work priorities for the remaining quarter of 2008. Following that meeting, work has focused on five areas: 1) Refinement and testing of monitoring protocols for ORWAP and detailed effectiveness monitoring (including invertebrate Index of Biological Integrity); 2) Scoping of potential wetland monitoring sites for rapid assessment and detailed effectiveness monitoring in preparation for 2009 field season; 3) Release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a wetland contractor to assist with monitoring; 4) Preparation for a sample design workshop for effectiveness monitoring of wetland projects in conjunction with EPA's Western Ecology Division; and 5) Review of DSL's database for wetland-related information. Staff reviewed and selected a wetland contractor, Adamus Resource Assessment, Inc., and will negotiate the contract terms in January of 2009. Field work will begin in earnest in the spring of 2009 with results from the first year of sampling available in late September of 2009.

Staff Contact

If you have questions or need additional information about NWI mapping, please contact Ashley Seim, GIS Specialist, at ashley.seim@state.or.us or 503-986-0186. If you have questions or need additional information about the EPA wetland grant, contact Renee Davis-Born, Data Analyst and Information Specialist, at renee.davis-born@state.or.us or 503-986-0029.