



# Oregon

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## Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

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January 6, 2009

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

**FROM:** Ken Bierly, Deputy Director

**SUBJECT:** **Agenda Item I: Partnership Investments – Special Investment Partnerships  
January 21-22, 2009 OWEB Board Meeting**

### I. Introduction

This report provides an update on the implementation of the Deschutes and Willamette Special Investment Partnerships (SIP). Each partnership is progressing well given the strength of the partnerships and range of activities involved.

The Deschutes and Willamette SIPs are part of the broader suite of OWEB partnership investments, which are also discussed in Agenda Item L.

### II. Background

#### A. Deschutes Special Investment Partnership

The Board approved the Deschutes Partnership in January of 2008 at the regular meeting in Astoria. The Deschutes Partnership was based on a strong working relationship developed locally between the Upper Deschutes Watershed Council, Crooked River Watershed Council, Deschutes River Conservancy, Deschutes Basin Land Trust, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, Portland General Electric Company, and the irrigation districts and landowners of the upper basin. The purpose of the Deschutes SIP is to improve habitat for the reintroduction of anadromous fish above the Pelton-Round Butte Dam complex.

The partners have made great strides to accomplish the objectives of the partnership during this first biennium. The partners have met to reevaluate priorities and identify future projects. They will present in detail their progress at the January Board meeting. The Deschutes partners have been very successful in their cooperative efforts and showing what is possible in terms of improving flow, habitat, and quality of life in the Upper Deschutes Basin.

#### B. Willamette Special Investment Partnership

The Board approved the Willamette Partnership in March of 2008 at the regular meeting in Medford. The Willamette Partnership was not as locally driven as the Deschutes Partnership. OWEB staff invested a significant amount of time and effort to engage a wide variety of

entities and interests to look at the issues raised in the Willamette Planning Atlas concerning channel complexity and connection of the river to the floodplain.

To date, three projects have been funded from the Willamette SIP. The three projects are located throughout the reach of the river (one in the Portland Area, one in the Salem area, and one in the Eugene area). The Willamette Mission Project has received good press coverage. (Attachment A) These projects have been used as a pilot for the development of a different relationship with the Willamette SIP review team. OWEB staff are scheduling more direct involvement of the review team in project development and design through construction. The deeper engagement of the review team reflects the unique nature of the projects proposed for the Willamette SIP.

OWEB has contracted with One Planet Consulting (Paula Burgess) to work with partners in developing SIP projects for the Willamette. Paula has a significant depth of experience and strong local contacts that will be a valuable help in moving the effort forward. There will be significant work to develop projects over the winter and spring with the allocation of funds to implement the resulting projects over the next few summers.

While the Willamette SIP has not progressed as rapidly as the Deschutes, there is building momentum around the concepts developed through extensive research on the Willamette funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and the recent Biological Opinion released by the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

### **III. Recommendation**

This is an informational item. No Board action is requested at this time.

#### Attachment

- A. December 9, 2008. Statesman Journal article on Willamette Mission



The project is also a redesign of a 1990s proposal by the Army Corps of Engineers. That project was suspended in 2001 for financial reasons but not before engineering design and a biological assessment were completed.

In addition to removing the old dike, Willamette Riverkeeper plans to have the old road that goes across the channel replaced with a bridge. Currently, the road is under water most of the winter, denying access to Beaver Island for at least four months out of the year.

Beaver Island has miles of horse, bike and pedestrian trails. It's where people go to exercise their pets off-leash. The equestrian trailhead parking and overnight horse camp are both on the island, as well as the fishing dock. Beaver Island is also home to the mission trail and viewing area, the site of the former Willamette Mission, established in 1834 by the Rev. Jason Lee. A horseshoe pit and volleyball court also are flooded all winter.

This winter, the public will have a chance to comment on recreation plans, which are still being designed.

"It turns out that the way we manage properties for native fish and animals and plants also assures that the properties will be here for people to enjoy for generations to come," said Dennis Wiely with Oregon Parks and Recreation Department.

The project — funded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Meyer Memorial Trust — also calls for widening and deepening the channel where it joins back up with the Willamette to prevent problems for the Wheatland Ferry.

About 80 acres of weed removal and planting native species is another part of the project.

Scientists will continue to monitor the site even after the heavy work is done. They plan to monitor for native species, such as red-legged frogs and western pond turtles.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board has targeted \$6 million for restoration projects along the Willamette River for 2007 to 2009, said Ken Bierly, OWEB's deputy director.

"The emerging vision is a series of these projects — some of which are in public ownership and some in private ownership," said David Hulse, a professor in the department of landscape architecture at University of Oregon. Hulse also is on the science advisory team which reviewed the project. "We see them as a series of coordinated efforts of strongholds for natural and ecological process that slowly over the next 20 to 40 years will cover more of the river but in ways compatible with farmers continuing to farm and cities continuing to grow."

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