



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



March 5, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Greg Sieglitz, Monitoring and Reporting Program Manager

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item K: Research Priorities**
March 18-19, 2009 OWEB Board Meeting

I. Introduction

This report provides an update on the discussions of the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee regarding priorities for applied research projects.

II. Background

OWEB offered its first open solicitation for research grants and awarded funding to nine projects in September of 2007. During 2008, the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee met to develop priority focus areas for the anticipated 2009 research grant cycle. A proposed approach to developing specific research priorities was presented to the Board at the September 2008 meeting. In September, the Board adopted the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee approach to revising the OWEB Research Priorities and to establish a process for soliciting research proposals in the spring of 2009.

At the January Board meeting, the Board adopted a modified approach, given the current budgetary constraints for the remainder of the biennium, and instructed staff to explore specific areas of research to bring before the Board in March. Staff then began working on revising the research priorities and establishing a process for soliciting research proposals in the spring of 2009.

III. Monitoring and Research Board Subcommittee Research Discussions in 2008

The Monitoring and Research Subcommittee, composed of Meta Loftsgaarden, Ken Williamson, and Bobby Brunoe, met to discuss monitoring and research priority development in 2008 following the direction developed during the 2007 Board Planning Session. The following are the recommendations from the Subcommittee meetings that were presented to the Board at the September 2008 meeting.

1. The Subcommittee encouraged the continued collaboration with and use of the U.S. Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Stations around the region.
2. The newly established Oregon Climate Change Research Institute under the Governor's Initiative on Climate Change and the Oregon Climate Change Commission are also important entities to continue to be connected to through our Research Grant Program.

Research on climate change should focus in part on addressing the scale issue and linking results to things that are important to Oregonians.

3. The Subcommittee recognized that the recent research grant solicitation and the current OWEB Research Priorities are significantly focused on anadromous salmonid research needs and that a broader suite of topics is necessary for future grant solicitations.
4. Given the strong connection between OWEB actions and salmon health, it was agreed that a continued focus for a portion of the research funds on salmon is important. Focusing on climate change, ocean conditions, and salmon health are important areas to establish a role for OWEB research investments. Of significant concern is the general lack of connection between fish management processes, especially predicting fish returns, and marine ecosystem research. Better predictive models could be used in concert with better coordination and the use of leading indicators rather than lagging indicators.
5. The Subcommittee recognized that effectiveness monitoring could add value to and highlight certain research needs over time. The idea of using the Grande Ronde and Rogue basins as pilot programs was discussed.
6. It was suggested that some research needs may require a direct investment or non-competitive award process to focus on the Planning Session comments and desires to link to 2014 needs.

At the time of the September 2008 report, the recommendation was for staff to embark upon revising the current research priorities over the winter and develop a work plan to be presented to the Board at its January 2009 meeting.

IV. Current Approach to Research Grant Selection

In light of potential revenue reductions and budget constraints, staff proposed a shift of course on this program area at the January Board meeting. Instead of developing a broad list of updated research priorities to inform an open solicitation for research grant proposals, staff recommended convening the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee to discuss a more narrow set of research priorities that could focus on applied research products such as: climate change and local watershed impacts; climate change and salmon returns from the ocean environment; economic evaluations of the role OWEB investments play in local economies and communities; modeling water availability; and terrestrial considerations of invasive species and wildfires.

The direction from the January Board meeting was to convene the Subcommittee to develop a reduced set of research focus areas and specific research grant considerations to present to the Board at the March Board meeting.

At the time of writing this staff report the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee has not yet met. Staff will convene the Subcommittee on March 11 and will provide the Board with an update on the deliberations of the Subcommittee at the Board meeting. Staff also anticipate making specific applied research funding recommendations for Board consideration at the March and June Board meetings.

V. Recommendation

Staff will recommend a list of specific research investments at the March meeting.