



Oregon

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Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Meta Loftsgaarden, Executive Director

**SUBJECT: Agenda Item H: Willamette Riparian Initiative and Governor's Clean Water Partnership
January 27-28, 2015 OWEB Board Meeting**

I. Introduction

This report provides a summary of the Governor's Clean Water Partnership, identifies early implementation roles involving OWEB, and requests the Board consider \$150,000 in support of technical assistance for the Willamette Riparian Initiative.

II. Clean Water Partnership

The Governor, as part of his recommended budget, proposes \$6 million in a coordinated investment to complete new tools to quantify clean water successes and trends, and direct existing federal and state conservation funding to areas where it will result in the greatest water quality and watershed health improvements. This initiative also enhances market-based approaches that avoid costly investment in water and wastewater treatment systems by creating markets for conservation improvements in Oregon's watersheds. The Clean Water Partnership includes a number of coordinated components from agencies including OWEB, and the departments of Agriculture, Environmental Quality, Forestry, Fish and Wildlife and Water Resources. Staff from all agencies have been working together with the Governor's office to design the coordinated approach.

III. Willamette Riparian Initiative

At the same time components of the Clean Water Partnership were being formalized in preparation for release of the Governor's Recommended Budget in late 2014, the Governor's Office asked OWEB to convene a number of local organizations in the Willamette Valley to discuss whether it was worthwhile to submit a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) proposal through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Because of the variety of investment types existing in the Willamette and unforeseen restrictions with the RCPP program, it was ultimately determined that the RCPP requirements would not fit the size of program envisioned by this collection of organizations. However, this first meeting started a dialogue about the common elements needed for a successful voluntary, local riparian conservation program, and resulted in the creation of the Willamette Riparian Initiative group.

OWEB convened a formal meeting with these and additional local implementers and other partners in October 2014. Here, the participants identified initial components and steps for development of a local riparian program and, more specifically, funding sources that support

riparian work and the varied availability of these funding sources across the counties and tributaries to the Willamette River. This information was provided to the Governor's Office as a part of their deliberations.

As a part of their deliberations, local implementers involved in the Willamette Riparian Initiative identified the need for a landowner work group to help identify barriers and opportunities to increasing participation in riparian conservation projects in the Willamette. Staff are following up with agricultural organizations to identify prospective members of this group.

IV. Funding Request

To support the combined efforts of the Clean Water Partnership and the Willamette Riparian Initiative, the Governor's office is requesting \$150,000 from the Oregon Plan/Governor's Priorities line item in the 2013-2015 spending plan. In a similar fashion as the framework established to support sage-grouse conservation efforts in eastern Oregon, this funding will help to build a comprehensive framework that will directly support implementation of riparian conservation projects and associated monitoring in the Willamette Valley.

While the program will begin in the Willamette, the goal is to develop a framework that can be utilized in other basins across the state to expand broad-scale, voluntary riparian conservation across farm, forest and ranchlands around the state.

V. Recommendation

Staff request the Board consider a \$150,000 grant from the Oregon Plan/Governor's Priorities spending plan line item to support implementation of the framework outlined in Section IV of this staff report, and delegate authority to the Executive Director to distribute the funds through appropriate grants and agreements, with an award date of January 28, 2015 to be used for any grant agreement(s). Funds will be used to develop the program's architecture, coordinate the various work groups, and ultimately develop an implementation-ready approach to broad-scale riparian restoration work in the Willamette.