



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

## Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

**FROM:** Meta Loftsgaarden, Executive Director  
Eric Hartstein, Senior Policy Coordinator

**SUBJECT: Agenda Item I: Salmon License Plate Policy  
July 28-29, 2015 OWEB Board Meeting**



### I. Introduction

OWEB receives half of the revenues that come from the sales of Salmon License Plates – the remaining half is dedicated to the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. In the last three biennia, this has averaged approximately \$500,000. Staff request the Board establish a policy directing expenditures of these funds toward identified salmon restoration projects in each region.

### II. Background

Prior to the 2015 Legislative Session, per Oregon statutes, Salmon License Plate revenues could be used for activities related to the restoration and protection of watersheds, native fish and wildlife and water quality. Prior to 2009, OWEB used these funds for a variety of granting purposes.

In 2009, faced with declining state revenues, both the executive branch and the legislature looked for a number of means to continue to support state services. Staff is an allowable cost under the statutes for license plate revenues, so while staff in other agencies were shifted from General Fund to Lottery Funds, OWEB shifted a staff person from Lottery Funds to Salmon License Plate revenues to continue essential agency granting functions. This position remained funded in this manner as a part of the agency's base budget in subsequent biennia.

In the 2015 Legislative Session, Salmon License Plate revenues distributed to OWEB were moved in the agency budget to the Grants program. The Legislature further tightened the use of Salmon License Plate revenues through passage of House Bill (HB) 3333, which restricts the funds to specific types of restoration projects. Specifically, HB 3333 directs the agency to use Salmon License Plate revenues only to fund projects to protect or restore native salmon habitat, or restore natural watershed or ecosystem functions by removing artificial obstructions to native salmon migration.

### **III. Incorporating Salmon License Plate Revenue into the Open Solicitation Grant Program**

In anticipation of the bill's passage, in early 2015, staff provided input on a variety of options for use of Salmon License Plate revenues. As a result of these discussions and feedback, staff propose the following:

- 1) Beginning with the April 2015 Open Solicitation grant cycle, each region will submit its most iconic salmon-related restoration project for recognition at the Board meeting where grants are awarded. For the April 2015 grant cycle, OWEB staff will recommend the projects to be recognized for Salmon License Plate funding at the October, 2015 OWEB Board meeting. In subsequent grant cycles, the Regional Review Teams will recommend the projects to be recognized for Salmon License Plate funding, and the process will continue in all open solicitation grant cycles.
- 2) With Board approval, identified projects will be funded partially through available Salmon License Plate revenues, with the remainder of the project funding coming through Lottery or Federal funds as appropriate.
- 3) This will allow Salmon License Plate revenues to help fund salmon-related restoration projects across the state which will meet the requirements of HB 3333. It will also provide for public outreach through press releases to local and statewide media that will announce funding of the selected projects through Salmon License Plate revenues.

### **IV. Recommendation**

Staff recommend the Board adopt a policy that in each Open Solicitation grant cycle, every region will recommend an iconic restoration project that will protect or restore native salmon habitat, or restore natural watershed or ecosystem functions by removing artificial obstructions to native salmon migration. With Board approval, Salmon License Plate revenues will be distributed amongst those identified projects.