



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

## Water Resources Department

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TO: Oregon Sustainability Board

FROM: Kimberly Grigsby, Sustainability Coordinator

SUBJECT: Response to OSB questions

The Water Resources Department (WRD) has received the three questions posed to agencies by the Oregon Sustainability Board and offers the following responses.

*1) How do the actions in your sustainability plan further the Governor's sustainability priorities and/or connect to your agency's mission? If they don't do either, what are your ideas on future sustainability actions your agency could work on that are more directly mission-related or better connected to the governor's priorities?*

WRD's mission is to serve the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management. The agency's co-equal goals are to restore and protect streamflows and watersheds in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of Oregon's ecosystems, economy and quality of life; and to directly address Oregon's water supply needs. Many of the actions in the WRD sustainability plan further our agency's mission and goals as well as the Governor's sustainability priorities. I have highlighted just a few examples below.

A key action identified in WRD's sustainability plan was to manage new ground water withdrawals in the Deschutes River Basin in a sustainable manner. The mitigation program allows the Department to authorize new ground water permits in the Deschutes Ground Water Study Area if the applicant provides mitigation for impacts to scenic waterway flow and senior water rights. Mitigation water is generated when projects put water instream through permanent or temporary instream transfers, instream leases, allocation of conserved water projects or other such projects. This goal supports the region's economy by enabling the department to authorize new uses of ground water for economic opportunities while protecting scenic waterways, other water right holders, and the ground water resource.

The WRD sustainability plan also identified the Water Management and Conservation Plan Program as a key measure related to the Governor's priorities and the agency's mission and goals. Municipal water providers and irrigation districts submit water management and conservation plans to the Department, either voluntarily or due to a

water right permit condition or other requirement. The plans facilitate water supply planning and encourage water conservation and efficient use of the state's water resources. For municipalities, the plans can also be linked to their ability to increase their water diversion under unperfected permits. The actions related to this goal are to expeditiously review water management and conservation plans and develop resources for this type of planning. Agency actions under this measure directly promote long-term water management by ensuring the efficient use of the state's water resources and facilitating water supply planning.

Finally, WRD's sustainability plan measure to implement voluntary streamflow restoration to meet instream flow needs is directly related to the agency's mission and goals. These actions restore and protect streamflows and watersheds.

*2) What agency sustainability effort, project or outcome are you most proud of, and why? Briefly describe. In what areas could your agency make some improvement? What projects or priorities have been less successful, and specifically, what barriers or obstacles have you encountered. What will your agency do over the next year to address these issues?*

WRD is particularly proud of several of its sustainability efforts related to its primary mission. Our agency is pleased with the results of the Deschutes Basin ground water mitigation program. While this program has taken some time to be fully implemented, it is now allowing applicants to obtain new ground water rights, while providing mitigation water instream. To date, the program has allowed WRD to issue 40 new permits, while providing over 1,661 acre-feet in mitigation water, which is protected instream.

WRD has also had success with its sustainability effort to implement voluntary streamflow restoration through instream leases, transfers, and allocations of conserved water in high priority areas for flow restoration. Our initial target was to achieve a 2% increase annually in the percent of high priority areas where voluntary efforts have resulted in increasing streamflows. While we did not reach our target in 2006, we had the greatest quantity of statewide flow restoration activities to date. Further, while no scientific study has been conducted that compares streamflow restoration by state, an informal survey shows that Oregon leads Washington, Idaho, and Montana in streamflow restoration.

The sustainability measure related to water conservation and management plans is also providing the desired results. For the water management and conservation plan program to be effective, the Department must review and approve plans in a timely fashion. WRD is generally meeting its goal of reviewing these plans within a 90-day period. In July 2006, the Department, in partnership with the Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) and Oregon State University (OSU), was awarded funding from the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) for a Water Management and Conservation Project. The goal of the grant is to create a guidebook to assist irrigation districts and other agricultural water suppliers to prepare water management and conservation plans that meet Oregon and federal requirements. The Project will also include a series of workshops and events to

introduce district managers, district patrons, board members, and others in water management and conservation plans and how these plans can aid them in meeting water supply and regulatory demands.

WRD also continues to promote regulatory streamlining. Working with the Office of Regulatory Streamlining and the Governor's Office, the Department pursued five regulatory streamlining concepts in 2005. All five of the bills passed. Our Department continues to look for new ways to make our processes faster and easier for businesses.

WRD's sustainability plan measures related to new internal and external outreach, such as the project to increase the public's understanding of sustainable practices by creating a sustainability display in the lobby of the North Mall Office Building, have been somewhat less successful. Similarly, the agency's efforts to transfer sustainable office practices to our field offices, while having made good progress have not been completely successful due to lack of available funding. These efforts have, however, increased awareness about sustainability among the agency's staff. The obstacles the agency has encountered have been lack of staff and financial resource to complete the projects. WRD intends to continue to devote as much staff time and resources as possible to continue making progress towards our goals.

*3) Historically, the OSB has played the role of reviewing/approving your agency's sustainability plan and getting progress updates (both written and in person). Moving forward, do you have any thoughts on how the OSB could most effectively support you and your agency's sustainability efforts (e.g. continue doing what we have been doing, or should we be doing different or additional things)? We are very interested in your ideas.*

WRD would suggest that the Oregon Sustainability Board's most valuable role has been to provide a venue for statewide, multi-agency discussions regarding sustainability. We would encourage the Sustainability Board to continue to provide this opportunity for agencies.