

INTERIM PROGRESS UPDATE TO OREGON SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

Progress To Date

Content: As part of its goal to reduce our agency's impact on the environment, WRD has taken numerous actions. Our Water Rights Section has initiated electronic peer review and has initiated sharing files electronically with field offices. Our Administrative Services Division initiated a shift from paper to electronic notification for comp time and personal business time notices to reduce the copies of personnel actions printed. In addition, field offices have implemented new practices to reduce energy and paper use including: replacing worn out printers with duplexing printers; replacing non-insulating doors; avoiding fax cover sheets; and adjusting programmable thermostats for energy savings. Our Technical Services Division implemented an internet web page that allows water right permit holders to provide on-line water use reporting, eliminating the need to use at least 1500 sheets of paper each year, and has initiated new software to accept well logs on-line. WRD also provides numerous documents via the web, unless a hard copy is specifically requested, including Commission agendas, minutes and staff reports, rulemaking notices, new administrative rules and public notices, resulting in a reduction of over 200,000 sheets of paper in a year. In order to manage new ground water withdrawals in the Deschutes River Basin in a sustainable manner, WRD has established a mitigation credit and banking system. This system has generated sufficient mitigation credits to allow the Department to issue 29 ground water permits for use of approximately 1,000 acre-feet of water. As part of this program, WRD has shifted interagency project review to electronic, rather than paper, format. WRD has also been successful in its efforts to implement voluntary streamflow restoration to meet instream flow needs. As of January 1, 2006, a record 587 cubic feet per second (cfs) of primary water rights were protected instream: 109 cfs through water right transfers, 458 cfs through water right leases and 109 cfs through allocation of conserved water projects. Further, WRD received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Columbia Transactions Program to help irrigation districts and others restore flows through irrigation efficiency projects in the Walla Walla River Basin.

Process: As an element of WRD's goal to reduce its impact on the environment, the Department's Sustainability Coordinator visited each regional office and participated in division staff meetings to educate staff about the sustainability plan and to identify ongoing and potential practices to reduce energy and paper use. As part of WRD's goal to promote long-term water supply planning, the agency has eliminated its backlog of water management and conservation plans. Further, WRD implemented numerous program improvements to streamline review and provide greater consistency in the agency's review of these plans. As part of our effort to address sustainable ground-water surface water management, WRD convened a subcommittee of the Commission's Ground Water Advisory Committee to develop policy direction relating to long-term and cumulative effects of new ground water rights on hydraulically connected surface water sources. As part of its effort to anticipate the possible effect of global warming on long-term water supplies, WRD staff have completed assessments of approximately 65% of the 2613 significant diversions inventoried as part of the Commission's water measurement and reporting strategy. WRD has initiated an electronic reporting system to track our progress in completing these assessments. WRD staff also organized a panel presentation on the possible effects of global warming on long-term water supplies at the January 2005 Water Resources Commission meeting. WRD has also worked to increase staff awareness of sustainability. To this end, the Department hosted a training event for management staff and invited a state sustainability leader to present at an all-staff meeting, our Director provided updates to our Commission on the Department's sustainability activities, the agency co-hosted two brown bag series on voluntary

simplicity and sense of place, and our sustainability coordinator met with some of our divisions to discuss sustainability.

Current Activities

Content: WRD's Administrative Services Division is pursuing an effort to have travel reimbursement payments electronically deposited in staff member's bank accounts rather than issuing checks. WRD is continuing to implement the Deschutes Basin mitigation credit and banking system by reviewing 20 proposed mitigation projects. WRD continues to review the water management and conservation plans filed with the Department to promote long-term water supply planning. As part of its effort towards sustainable ground water-surface water management, WRD continues to study ground water basins in an effort to understand and define the extent of hydraulic connection, as funding allows. WRD continues to look for ways to implement its voluntary streamflow restoration tools and to build partnerships with water users and other interests to work to meet instream flow needs.

Process:

The subcommittee of the Commission's Ground Water Advisory Committee continues to meet to develop policy direction relating to long-term and cumulative effects of new ground water rights on hydraulically connected surface water sources. WRD continues to work with the Office of Regulatory Streamlining to identify and implement regulatory streamlining initiatives, including efforts to streamline water-related permitting in conjunctions with the Department of State Lands and the Department of Environmental Quality.

Future Plans

Content: WRD will reduce its impact on the environment by converting its field enforcement manual from paper to electronic format. WRD will promote long-term water use efficiency and conservation by performing new well construction inspections with an emphasis on well construction practices that prohibit wasteful cross connections between separate aquifers and well construction practices that prohibit contamination of ground water. WRD will also implement new technology that enhances its ability to make water measurement data available to the public. These activities will be conducted as funding allows.

Process:

WRD will work to increase staff awareness of sustainability by continuing to seek educational opportunities for managers and staff. The agency will review its application forms and eliminate any requests for unnecessary information in an effort to streamline its regulatory processes.