



Oregon Water Resources Department

2010-11 Issue Brief: Agency Overview

OUR MISSION
“To serve the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management”
GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To restore and protect streamflows and watersheds in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of Oregon’s ecosystem, economy, and quality of life. • To directly address Oregon’s water supply needs.
KEY STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet Oregon’s Water Needs, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing an integrated water resource strategy. ○ Helping to develop underground water storage opportunities. ○ Assisting with water conservation and supply development. ○ Ensuring that instream needs are met. ○ Providing grants to communities. • Manage Oregon’s Water Resources, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Upholding Oregon water law. ○ Adjudicating water right claims in the Klamath Basin. ○ Ensuring safety in dam and well construction and operation. ○ Processing water rights, permits, transfers and certificates in a timely manner. • Understand Our Water Resources, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Forecasting and measuring changing conditions related to climate change. ○ Collecting and providing crucial data about the status of ground water levels, stream flow, peak flow, and basin yield throughout Oregon. ○ Continuing our Commission’s strategy of measuring significant diversions.
KEY BUDGET INVESTMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oregon’s Integrated Water Resources Strategy • Implementation/Construction Grants

Water Rights Services Division	39.00 FTE
<p>This division processes incoming applications for new water use and permit extensions; issues water right permits and certificates; processes applications for instream leases, reservations of water, and water right transfers; and coordinates hydroelectric relicensing. This Division serves as a record-keeping body for the existing water rights in Oregon and adjudicates pre-water law vested and federal reserved water rights.</p>	
Field Services Division	51.00 FTE
<p>This division enforces Oregon’s water law in the field, regulating water uses with a newer priority date for the protection of older rights. The division reviews water management and conservation plans, assists in water supply planning, collects hydrographic data, and performs dam and well inspections.</p>	
Technical Services Division	36.29 FTE
<p>This division provides information services support for the Department including mapping, database management, and website development. The division performs surface water and groundwater hydrology analysis, dam safety evaluations, enforcement, and oversees well construction.</p>	
Administrative Services Division	12.00 FTE
<p>The division supports the day-to-day operations of the agency through human resources, payroll, accounting, budgeting, facilities management, and support services functions. This division also manages the Water Development Loan Fund.</p>	
Director’s Office	8.00 FTE
<p>Coordinates Water Resources Commission activities, policy, legislation, public information, media, legal services provided by the Attorney General’s office, and contested case hearings.</p>	
Total	146.29 FTE

The Water Resources Commission, a seven-member citizen board, oversees the activities of the Water Resources Department. The Commission is responsible for setting statewide water policy, consistent with state law.



Commission members are appointed by the Governor for four-year terms, subject to confirmation by the Oregon Senate. The Commission includes a citizen appointed from each of five regions of the state (as shown in the map above) as well as the east-side and a west-side at large.

Members of the Commission from left to right:

- Phil Ward (Director),
- Jeanne LeJeune
(West Side at Large),
- Ray Williams
(East Side at Large),
- John Jackson
(Chair, Northwest Region),
- Mary Meloy
(North Central Region),
- Carol Whipple
(West Central Region),
- Charlie Barlow
(Vice-Chair, Eastern Region),
- John Roberts
(Southwest Region)



On February 24, 1909, the Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 77, commonly referred to as the 1909 Oregon Water Code. House Bill 192 passed in the same session, declaring that “all water within the State from all sources of water belong to the public.” With some exceptions, water users must obtain a permit or water right to use water from any source. Like most states west of the Mississippi, Oregon uses the Doctrine of “Prior Appropriation,” meaning the first person to obtain a water right on a stream is the last to be shut off in times of scarcity. This provides certainty to water users, by ensuring a source of water that will support economic investments.

Oregon water law has continued to evolve. For example, in 1955, the Legislative Assembly adopted the state Ground Water Act, regarding the management of ground water resources. Also in 1955, the authorization of basin planning shifted Oregon's focus to planning and management of water resources at the Administrative Basin level. The 1987 Instream Water Right Act has allowed Oregon to protect more water instream than any other western state. The Allocation of Conserved Water Program—revamped in 1993—allows water users to apply conserved water to new lands, new uses, and instream uses, based on negotiations with the Water Resources Department.