

OREGON Watershed Enhancement Board



2018 Strategic Plan



Mission: To help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies

June 25, 2018

On behalf of the board members and staff of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), we invite you to review our 2018-2028 strategic plan. Based on a year and a half of conversations with partners and grantees, this plan celebrates all we have accomplished together over the last twenty years and sets a course for the next ten.

OWEB, our partners, and our grantees have much to celebrate. With over \$550 million in investments from Lottery, Salmon License Plates, federal and other funds, our grantees have restored 5,100 miles of streams, and improved habitat on over 1.1 million acres in the watersheds above those streams. Coupled with the restoration or creation of 51,000 acres of wetlands and estuaries, these gains support clean water and habitat for Oregonians and the fish and wildlife species that call this state home.

Our current investment portfolio – ranging from our flagship Open Solicitation grants to our newly established Organizational Collaboration grants – provides the foundation to improve the health of our watersheds by investing in people in our local communities. OWEB grants support local community partners to work with farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and local contractors to provide clean water for Oregonians and healthy habitat for our fish and wildlife.

Our new plan builds on that strong granting foundation. As we look forward to the next ten years, we will focus our efforts, and current and future grant offerings, to address these strategic priorities:

- Working with partners, we will help Oregonians better **understand the relationship between people and watersheds**, and provide opportunities for them to improve the health of their own watershed. At the same time, we will ensure that **leaders at all levels of watershed work reflect the diversity of Oregonians**.
- Our board and staff recognize that healthy watersheds are supported by the people who care for them. As we look to the future, OWEB will use its current grant offerings and consider new offerings that **support community capacity and strategic partnerships to achieve healthy watersheds**.
- While OWEB is a major investor in healthy watersheds, there are many others with a vested interest in this work. In partnership with agencies, foundations, and the business community, we will help **watershed organizations have access to a diverse and stable funding portfolio**.
- Since our inception, much of the work of our local partners has taken place on private farms, ranches and forestlands. Over the next ten years, we will find ways to improve the landowner access to funding and technical support for conservation on their lands, ensuring that **the value of working lands is fully integrated into watershed health**.
- We will **invest in coordinated monitoring and shared learning to advance watershed restoration effectiveness** and increase the capacity to track and communicate the impact of OWEB's grant-making. Oregon has long been recognized as a leader in its care for the watersheds we call home. Oregonians have chosen to permanently invest in healthy watersheds, which allows local partners the space to test **bold and innovative actions to achieve health in Oregon's watersheds**.

Over the past year of conversations, we have learned many of you share these same priorities, and we hope you will join us in implementing them. As we identify specific actions and measures to track our plan, we will share our progress with you. We look forward to working with you to improve the health of Oregon's watersheds, and the opportunity to celebrate our successes over the next ten years.

Sincerely,

Randy Labbe and Will Neuhauser
OWEB Co-Chairs

Preamble



The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board cares about and invests state funding in the health of the land in Oregon's watersheds and the water that flows through it.

Everyone in the world lives in a watershed. Watersheds encompass every square inch of land on the planet, starting at the very top of the highest ridge. They include every place from which water flows as it enters creeks, then streams, then rivers, then the ocean and lakes. A watershed is as much about the land across and through which water flows as it is about the water itself. Urban, rural, desert, rainforest – every part of the landscape is in a watershed, and every part of the landscape matters when we talk about watershed health.

Healthy watersheds work hard. They move sediment from the mountains to their ultimate destination, beaches and bays, sorting it along the way to create diverse landscapes and habitats. They cycle nutrients and convert them into forms that living organisms can use. They purify and store water, and then meter its release into streams to reduce flooding and damaging erosion in the winter and to sustain flows and cool temperatures during the dry season. Watersheds even improve air quality by absorbing pollutants and greenhouse gases.¹

In addition to environmental benefits, healthy watersheds matter for our state's economy and communities. A watershed that is healthy can grow big trees. When managed with care, those trees support a sustainable timber harvest. At the same time, they provide homes for owls and support habitat for salmon in the streams. A healthy watershed

grows sagebrush where birds nurture and protect their young, and a place for ranchers to raise cattle that thrive. Water that runs through lands that are cared for and managed is cleaner, requiring less treatment for a family's drinking water. Clean water and healthy forests and deserts create spaces for those families to swim, camp, hike, fish, and hunt.

We care about watersheds – those lands and water that sustain us. A healthy watershed provides enough food, water, and shelter for the people, plants, fish and wildlife that inhabit it – not just for Oregonians now, but for future generations as well. In return, healthy watersheds are supported by people who reflect the diversity of their communities. OWEB will seek out and develop leaders that reflect the diversity of Oregon to engage them in the rewarding work of watershed restoration.

When the watershed and its water are vibrant and healthy, we are too.



K. Handley

1 Marin County Department of Public Works (2014)

Who We Are



We are committed to exemplifying the values we hold to be important in this work. These ideas are about our conscience, our convictions, and the commitments about our ethos and ethic.

In all things, we will...

Be bold

We believe in pursuing the greatest potential, not the easiest path. To be bold means to go be unafraid to listen to and explore new ideas even if they run counter to established processes. It means that we will focus on opportunities and strive to overcome the barriers we face. Practicing boldness pushes us to think in new ways and try new and innovative strategies.

Be open and transparent

Being open and transparent means being committed to active, two-way communication internally and externally as a means for developing and maintaining strong partnerships. We will ensure that all decisions are transparently made and their reasoning is clearly communicated. We will consistently check in with partners to make sure they understand what we've communicated.

Consider future Oregonians

Everything we do now will impact the Oregonians of the future. We will be thoughtful about helping stakeholders develop sustainable watersheds. We will be informed by Oregon's legacy of watershed restoration and cooperative conservation while developing a vision for cooperative conservation in the future that is equitable and inclusive.

Be curious

Being curious means not just accepting the status quo but asking "why," "how," and "what if?" We will approach all situations with curiosity, encouraging staff and stakeholders to ask questions as they think about our watersheds and our practices. When we are curious, we are more apt to be responsive and flexible, adapting to the opportunities and challenges around us. We will seek to listen, learn, and think about watershed health and cooperative conservation in new ways and through fresh perspectives.



What We Believe In



We hold fast to a set of ideas that provide a fundamental and underlying rationale for our work. These are our foundational perspectives. They keep us oriented. These are the core ideas that guide us.

Dedicated to the idea that...

Healthy watersheds sustain healthy communities now and in the future.

Oregon's watersheds are intertwined with its people – the land is a part of our culture, our food and water, our work and our recreation. As a result, the well-being of all Oregonians depends on the health of our watersheds. Current and future generations need access to whole and healthy watersheds. People and communities are an integral part of their watershed, just like fish and wildlife. A community's economic and social health comes from the health of the lands that surround them and the ability to draw enjoyment from clean water, open spaces, and natural habitats.

Every Oregonian plays a role in the health of our watersheds.

We are committed to being profoundly inclusive because we believe every person of every background – whether urban or rural, rich or poor; regardless of age, ethnicity, education, beliefs, or politics – has something valuable to contribute to a healthy watershed. When people connect with their watershed, they will care for their watershed. The roles in each watershed are many and overlapping: planner, funder, doer, enjoyer, and communicator, among others. We encourage every citizen, staff, and stakeholder to find their niche and to help others find theirs.

It takes broad partnership to support resilient watersheds.

The Oregon way is unique. In Oregon, no individual landowner or community needs to grapple with watershed challenges alone. Cooperative conservation is built from broad, diverse partnerships that collaborate to develop and implement enduring watershed solutions. It is the Oregon way to invest in restoring and sustaining healthy, resilient watersheds. Public investment in watersheds is a value and commitment of Oregonians.

The work to improve our watersheds requires we take the long view.

Healthy watersheds require the stewardship of generations. With permanent funding, we have the opportunity to test approaches that get to root causes. The challenges we must address came from generations of impacts, and will require we and our partners take the long view in determining the best approaches to address them. We are engaging in work we might not see the end of; it requires patience, persistence, discipline, and a vision for the future that embraces the long view.



The Impact We Want to Achieve



Our ideas of intended impact are the areas of the change we would like to see in Oregon as a result of our work. These ideas describe how Oregon will be different as a result of all that we and our partners accomplish. Everything we do is designed to achieve results in the following areas of impact.

Our work is in service to...

Healthy, resilient watersheds (Ecological)

What we mean: A healthy, resilient watershed provides clean water and a vibrant place to live for people, fish, and wildlife - now and in the future. OWEB's investments will address the root causes of watershed problems. These investments will result in measurable improvements that lead to healthier streams and healthier upland habitat, while ensuring that the work of our grantees is resilient to long-term impacts of climate change and population dynamics.

Broad care and stewardship of watersheds by Oregonians (Social)

What we mean: Broad care and stewardship of Oregon's natural places can come about only by greater understanding, awareness, and appreciation by each Oregonian of the impact of their everyday actions on the health of their watersheds. Working with partners, OWEB will make special effort to meaningfully engage each Oregonian, including underserved and under-represented populations. This engagement will recognize each Oregonian's unique connection with the land – whether cultural, spiritual, economic, or recreational. OWEB will encourage stewardship as a path toward vibrancy, health and abundance in Oregon's watersheds, and promote engagement of current and future generations.



K. Handley

Adaptive capacity of communities to support their watersheds (Community)

What we mean: OWEB seeks to ensure all communities empower diverse stakeholders to design, implement, and evaluate collaborative conservation actions. Engaged community members are better able to adapt to new ideas, address new challenges and design new approaches to improve their watershed. When landowners, land managers and local citizens are actively involved in shared learning and leadership within local organizations, the capacity of communities to improve the health of their watersheds is expanded.

Strengthened economies emerging from healthy watersheds (Economic)

What we mean: Oregon’s natural resource industries – agriculture, forestry, fishing, recreation – are dependent on healthy watersheds to be sustainable. The work of restoring natural areas creates jobs in communities, and the impact of a healthy watershed extends to all segments of Oregon’s economy and is essential for the economic vitality of the State. When communities understand the link between healthy watersheds and a strong economy, they are more likely to invest in improving both.

OWEB will support the capacity of local organizations to engage their community in cooperative conservation while benefiting Oregon’s diverse economies.

Strong and diverse partnerships that promote and sustain healthy watersheds (Sectoral)

What we mean: Strong and diverse partnerships include the meaningful involvement of local, regional, and statewide organizations, public and private investors, government partners and experts from across Oregon. By understanding the needs of the watershed and community, OWEB is uniquely positioned to support diverse partnerships at all levels. Collaboration allows the opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas, cross-boundary work, adaptive learning, and heightened fidelity to science. OWEB will encourage partners to develop a common vision and objectives to improve their watershed.



The Approach We Take



We believe that every endeavor is guided by a set of commitments not just about the “why” and the “what,” but also the “how.” These are the ways we are committed to engaging in our work. This is our approach. These principles modify everything we do.

Our work is characterized by...

◆ Involving stakeholders broadly and in partnership

- Involving the community members at all levels
- Promoting community ownership of watershed health
- Collaborating and authentically communicating
- Bringing together diverse interests
- Building and mobilizing partnerships



Confederated Tribes
of Warm Springs

◆ Using best available science supported by local knowledge

- Basing approaches on the best available science
- Advancing efficient, science driven operations
- Addressing root sources and causes
- Incorporating local knowledge, experience, and culture
- Catalyzing local energy and investment



◆ Investing collaboratively with long-term outcomes in mind

- Aligning investments with current and potential funding partners
- Maintaining progress into the future
- Stewarding for the long term
- Taking the long view on projects and interventions

◆ Demonstrating impact through meaningful monitoring and evaluation

- Providing evidence of watershed change
- Measuring and communicating community impact
- Increasing appropriate accountability
- Incorporating flexibility, adaptive management – when we see something that’s not working, we do something about it



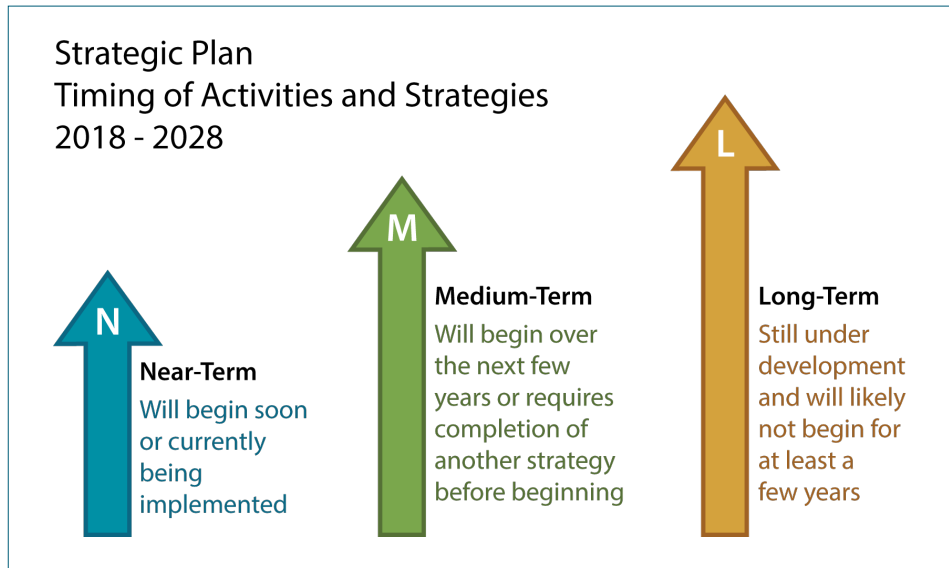
Confederated Tribes
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◆ Reaching and involving underrepresented populations

- Seeking to include the voice and perspectives that are not typically at the table
- Specific, targeted engagement
- Ensuring information is available and accessible to diverse audiences

Priorities, Strategies, and Action Examples

With extensive input from our stakeholders, OWEB has designed a strategic plan to provide direction for the agency and its investments over the next 10 years. With that in mind, the strategies within each priority are staged. In some cases, one strategy may need to be completed before another begins. In other cases, based on capacity, some strategies are prioritized for implementation in the near term, while others may not be implemented until later. The arrows below are indicated next to each strategy to highlight when strategies are expected to be implemented.



In addition, some strategies are focused on work with our partners and stakeholders, while others may result in a policy or funding shift for the OWEB Board. Strategies, objectives, or activities that may result in a policy or funding shift by the board are represented by the yellow icon with 3 arrows.





Priority 1

Broad awareness of the relationship between people and watersheds

What we mean

OWEB serves as an information source and catalyst for partners as they carry messages to their stakeholders about the importance of watersheds to the health and vitality of all Oregonians. This will include the development of story-telling and community engagement with dual goals. First, to help Oregonians take an active role in the health of their watershed and second, to increase awareness of the role watersheds play in improving the well-being of the people who reside in them. This will result in a growing care and stewardship of local watersheds and a deeper commitment to watershed work throughout the state.

Strategies

1. Develop and implement broad awareness campaigns and highlight personal stories to tell the economic, restoration and community successes of watershed investments.
2. Increase involvement of non-traditional partners in strategic watershed approaches.

Outcomes

- Non-traditional partners are involved and engaged in strategic watershed approaches.
- Successes are celebrated at the local and state level through use of appropriate tools.
- More Oregonians:
 - are aware of the impacts of their investment in their watershed.
 - understand why healthy watersheds matter to their family and community.
 - understand their role in keeping their watershed healthy.





Intent

Broad care and stewardship of Oregon's natural places can come about only by greater understanding, awareness, and appreciation by each Oregonian of the impact of their everyday actions on the health of their watersheds. Working with Oregon Lottery, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs), land trusts and others, OWEB will tell the stories of the people, places, and partnerships that make Oregon's conservation ethic unique. This will include celebrating accomplishments and saying "Thank You" to all Oregonians who support this work.

Objectives

- In partnership with Oregon Lottery, the Oregon Conservation Partnership, and other conservation partners, develop tools and resources for local stakeholders to help them highlight conservation actions and the people and places impacted by those actions.
- Develop and share consistent messages across all OWEB's partners and stakeholders regarding the importance of watersheds to the health and vitality of all Oregonians.
- Train and educate local communicators to tell the story.

Activity Examples

Short Term (1-3 years)

- Coordinate with Lottery, SWCDs, watershed councils, and land trusts on 20th Anniversary campaign, including training for local organizations to help tell the story.

Medium-Long Term (3-6 years)

- Develop a continuous feed of stories (people and actions) to provide for Lottery to highlight ongoing conservation actions.





Intent

New, non-traditional partners (corporations, recreation and healthcare industries, etc.) can help improve watershed health. This will require new and different approaches to reach out to partners and engage them in ways that benefit their organization. Outreach is one critical component of establishing and maintaining partnerships. Strong and diverse partnerships include the meaningful involvement of local, regional, and statewide organizations; public and private investors; government partners; and experts from across Oregon. By understanding the needs of the watershed and community, OWEB is uniquely positioned to help to connect resources with communities. Collaboration allows the opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas, cross-boundary work, adaptive learning, and heightened fidelity to science. OWEB will encourage partners to develop a common vision and objectives to improve their watershed.

Objectives

- Identify potential non-traditional partners that are important to improving watershed health.
- Develop outreach and engagement strategies to increase engagement with non-traditional partners.
- Identify and learn from our stakeholders who are already engaging with non-traditional partners.

Activity Examples

Medium-Long Term (3-6 years)

- Identify the needs, opportunities, and gaps that non-traditional partners can fill.
- Work with the Oregon Conservation Partnership to engage with non-traditional partners toward a common goal, including organizations that may have different, but overlapping missions.
- Support stakeholders as they work to engage more diverse partners.





Priority 2

Leaders at all levels of watershed work reflect the diversity of Oregonians

What we mean

OWEB's board and staff will engage with partners and grantees to develop models and approaches that actively involve all Oregonians in improving the health of our watersheds. In its own practice, OWEB will seek out and develop leaders that reflect the diversity of Oregon to engage them in the rewarding work of improving the health of their watersheds. OWEB will adopt practices that support diversity in our own work and encourage equity in our grant-making through training, peer-to-peer learning, and other awareness-increasing approaches. This will shape the culture of the watershed work over time, developing a restoration system that is diverse and inclusive.

Strategies

1. Listen, learn and gather Information about diverse populations.
2. Create new opportunities to expand the conservation table.
3. Develop funding strategies with a lens toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). 🌱

Outcomes

- New and varied populations are engaged in watershed restoration.
- Grantees and partners actively use DEI tools and resources to recruit a greater diversity of staff, board members and volunteers.
- Increased engagement of under-represented communities in OWEB grant programs and programs of our stakeholders.
- OWEB, state agencies, and other funders consider opportunities to fund natural resource projects with a DEI lens.



Strategy 2.1




Listen, learn and gather information about diverse populations

Intent

OWEB's board and staff will engage with partners and grantees to develop models and approaches that actively involve all Oregonians, particularly the historically marginalized, to improve the health of our watersheds. OWEB will take the time to listen to and learn from our partners, stakeholders, and others working with the broad diversity of Oregonians.

Objectives

- Engage with current and potential future grant applicants from a diversity of backgrounds to determine the accessibility of our grant programs and if we are meeting their needs.
- Listen to stakeholders about barriers/concerns related to program types and accessibility.
- Increase understanding among staff, board, and stakeholders what DEI work entails.
- Increase understanding of current and potential partners who can help OWEB improve DEI in our board, staff, and grant-making.
- Create a plan to adapt services to accommodate gaps and barriers wherever possible. 

Activity Examples

Short Term (1-3 years)

- With partners, survey our grantees to learn about the demographics of their stakeholders.
- Meet with other state and federal partners who are already doing DEI work to learn, understand available resources, and find ways to partner.
- Hold trainings for staff and board regarding both DEI and the state's unique relationship with tribes.

Strategy 2.2



Create new opportunities to expand the conservation table

Intent

OWEB's board and staff will engage with partners and grantees to develop models and approaches that actively involve all Oregonians in improving the health of our watersheds.

Objectives

- In coordination with Oregon Conservation Partnership, develop strategies to help stakeholders recruit and engage under-represented communities based on training and feedback from Strategy 2.1.
- Seek new partnerships to recruit and maintain high-quality, diverse board and staff.
- Implement a continuous feedback loop to evaluate strategies again after completion of Strategy 2.1.

Activity Examples

Medium term (3-6 years)


- Following implementation of Strategy 2.1, develop work plan to expand DEI through OWEB's programs, staff, and board.
- Build DEI conversations and training into staff and board onboarding processes.



Intent

OWEB's board and staff will engage with partners and grantees to develop models and approaches that actively involve all Oregonians in improving the health of our watersheds. Through this process, OWEB will take the time to listen to and learn from our partners, stakeholders, and others working with the broad diversity of Oregonians.

Objectives

- Develop funding models to represent DEI principles. 
- Engage under-represented communities as funding recipients.
- Mobilize under-represented communities as partners in watershed conservation efforts.

Activity Examples

Medium Term (3-6 years)

- Activities will be built out after OWEB's initial listening and learning in years 1-3 of the strategic plan.





Priority 3

Community capacity and strategic partnerships achieve healthy watersheds

What We Mean

Diverse organizations and agencies provide capacity in many forms. OWEB will work with partners of all sizes and at all organizational levels to design resources and deploy tools to enhance the capacity of communities and strategic partnerships to participate in cooperative conservation. Partnerships will have the support they need to develop and implement strategic, science-based approaches to improve watershed health. OWEB will support watershed organizations and associated watershed work at all levels in pursuit of a statewide restoration network that is resilient and sustainable, and capable of achieving ecological outcomes. OWEB will be a statewide champion for partnerships in watershed health, supporting the environment that allows strong and effective partnerships of all sizes and at all levels to grow and flourish. Partnerships that engage a broad range of stakeholders are more inclusive, equitable, effective, consistent, reliable, purposeful, and innovative. This inclusion will amplify the impact of watershed work and develop resilience and capacity in the organizations seeking to improve and sustain healthy watersheds.

Outcomes

- Partners access best community capacity and strategic practices and approaches.
- OWEB can clearly tell the story of the value of capacity investments.
- Funders are aware of the importance of funding capacity.
- Lessons learned from past capacity investments inform funding decisions.
- Restoration projects involving multiple agencies are implemented more efficiently and effectively
- State-federal agencies increase participation in strategic partnerships.



Strategy 3.1




Evaluate and identify lessons learned from OWEB's past capacity funding

Intent

By evaluating one of OWEB's longest-running programs and developing lessons learned, we are encouraging staff and stakeholders to ask questions as they think about how capacity investments are used. When we are curious, we are more apt to be responsive and flexible, adapting to the opportunities and challenges around us. We will seek to listen, learn, and think about cooperative conservation in new ways and through fresh perspectives.

Objectives

- Evaluate existing SWCD and watershed council capacity investments.
- Establish process to monitor, evaluate, and develop opportunities to improve investments in capacity to meet community needs.
- Design strategies that improve capacity programs and build on lessons learned. 

Activity Examples

Short Term (1-3 years)

- Exchange information with other funders to learn how they invest in organizational capacity.
- Complete a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of past watershed council and SWCD capacity investments.
- Quantitative: Understand what our capacity dollars are already funding and the local accomplishments that are the result of these investments.
- Qualitative: Interview current and previous SWCD/WC staff and board members.

Medium Term (3-6 years)

- Identify lessons learned. Share with partners (funders, state and federal agencies).
- Use lessons learned to continue to adaptively manage capacity funding going forward.

Strategy 3.2




Champion best approaches to build organizational, community and partnership capacity

Intent

The Oregon way is unique. In Oregon, no individual landowner or community needs to grapple with watershed challenges alone. Cooperative conservation is built from broad, diverse partnerships that collaborate to develop and implement enduring watershed solutions. We seek to evaluate and learn to continue providing operating capacity funds for local organizations to advance conservation missions. We understand that capacity funding enables local partners to engage their communities in cooperative conservation while benefiting Oregon's diverse economies.


Objectives

- Evaluate the current state of capacity investments, including opportunities and gaps.
- Increase understanding of the connection between capacity investments and conservation actions.
- Identify ingredients of successful partnerships and develop tools for partnership self-evaluation.
- Using lessons learned, provide a range of resources including funding, technical tools, and learning opportunities that serve the needs of existing, new, and emerging partnerships, and local capacity. 


 Continued

Activity Examples

Short term (1-3 years)

- Analyze other capacity funding models, including diverse, non-traditional approaches.
- Explore and share information and best practices on high-performing partnerships.
- Explore geographic/regional capacity funding to fill core capacity functions, incorporating results from the retrospective evaluation.
- Provide funding and support for regional shared services. 

Medium Term (3-6 years)

- Considering the life cycle of a partnership, community opportunities, and gaps, identify resources needed to improve stability for organizations, partnerships, and the restoration community.
- Based on research, implement a pilot to test new ways for supporting organizational, community and/or partnership capacity. 
- Use results of research to evaluate OWEB's spending plan and fund allocation for operating capacity.
- Assess needs for providing information to help foster a statewide network of high-performing partners.

Long Term (6-10 years)

- Review results of pilot and make any adjustments to OWEB's operating capacity funding. 

Strategy 3.3




Accelerate state/federal agency participation in partnerships

Intent

Natural resource agencies have complementary missions in support of watershed health. OWEB can support existing and new models that increase engagement of state/federal agencies in strategic partnerships. Strong and diverse partnerships include the meaningful involvement of local, regional, and statewide organizations, public and private investors, government partners and experts from across Oregon. By understanding the needs of the watershed and community, OWEB is uniquely positioned to help to connect resources with communities. Collaboration allows the opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas, cross-boundary work, adaptive learning, and heightened fidelity to science.

Objectives

- Develop approaches to help local organizations improve partnerships with state/federal agencies.
- Increase engagement of and coordination among state/federal agencies.
- Develop new models of efficient and effective coordination that make restoration easier. 

Activity Examples

Short term (1-3 years)

- Coordinate with federal and state agency OWEB Board members to highlight the importance of agency collaboration.
- Work with federal and state agency OWEB Board members to continue to elevate the need for conservation and restoration coordination among agencies.
- Continue to support existing effective state/federal agency partnerships, including providing updates at Board meetings and Natural Resources Cabinet.
- Coordinate with state and federal agencies to identify pilot areas that can be models for efficient and effective restoration project implementation.



Priority 4

Watershed organizations have access to a diverse and stable funding portfolio

What We Mean

OWEB will work with traditional and non-traditional funders to support the work that watershed organizations accomplish in communities. At the same time, OWEB and partners will work with these same organizations to strengthen their ability to seek and secure more diverse funding sources for watershed work. This two-pronged approach will provide communities the resources to move forward strategically and boldly in addressing watershed restoration needs.

Outcomes

- Agencies have a shared vision about how to invest strategically in restoration.
- Oregon has a comprehensive analysis of the state's natural and built infrastructure to direct future investments.
- Foundations and corporations are partners in watershed funding efforts.
- Foundations and corporations increase their investment in restoration.
- Natural resources companies are implementing watershed health work that is also environmentally sustainable.



Greenbelt Land Trust



Intent

There are a number of public agencies who provide funding related to watershed health, water quality and habitat. OWEB can support the development of statewide coordination of investments including grants, mitigation, and other funding mechanisms. Strong and diverse partnerships include the meaningful involvement of local, regional, and statewide organizations, public and private investors, government partners and experts from across Oregon. By understanding the needs of the watershed and community, OWEB is uniquely positioned to help to connect resources with communities.

Objectives

- Coordinate development of a state conservation investment vision to create clarity from the highest levels of the executive branch to local landowners.
- Better coordinate mitigation and restoration funding to leverage conservation efforts.
- Evaluate OWEB's role in, and capacity to, coordinate funding across agencies.
- Develop cross-agency approaches to coordinate investments at the state level.

Activity Examples

Short Term (1-3 years)

- Map the landscape of natural resource funding around the state and identify areas for potential alignment.
- Update OWEB mitigation policy to increase clarity around OWEB investments and how they work with mitigation funding.

Medium Term (3-6 years)

- Research approaches to increase state-level granting across agencies.
- Identify opportunities to leverage mitigation and restoration investments across state agencies.
- Work with state agencies to develop state investment vision.
- Identify innovative public agency investment strategies to better align with other funders.







Intent

Foundations may or may not know about the important restoration work occurring in Oregon. While restoration may not be a priority for foundations, the additional benefits of restoration projects may be. Jobs, community capacity, health, and community resiliency are just a few additional benefits that come from restoration projects, which may be of interest to private foundations. Strong and diverse partnerships include the meaningful involvement of local, regional, and statewide organizations, public and private investors, government partners and experts from across Oregon. By understanding the needs of the watershed and community, OWEB is uniquely positioned to help to connect resources with communities.

Objectives


- Develop funder-focused messaging around the multiple benefits of restoration investments.
- Work with other funders to better reflect environmental, community and economic values in conservation granting.
- Partner with foundations to invest in strategic partnerships around conservation and restoration. 
- Reduce the risk of projects from a private foundation's perspective to encourage project investment. 
- Seek ways to increase connections with tribal foundations.

Activity Examples

Short -Term (1-3 years)

- Map the landscape of natural resource funding around the state and identify areas for potential alignment.
- Utilize existing convenings to highlight OWEB successes and open a dialogue with funders about co-investment.

Medium Term (3-6 years)

- Use existing networks to meet with funders as the opportunities arise.
- Explore opportunities for expanding conversations with foundations.
- Share OWEB's innovations with private foundations to encourage their investment in conservation.
- Identify new and innovative foundation investment strategies to better align with other funders. 




Intent

Corporations in Oregon have a vested interest in clean water and healthy watersheds. OWEB will work with partners to identify ways to help corporations invest strategically in the health of their local watershed. Strong and diverse partnerships, include the meaningful involvement of local, regional, and statewide organizations, public and private investors, government partners, and experts from across Oregon. By understanding the needs of the watershed and community, OWEB is uniquely positioned to help to connect corporate resources with communities.



Continued

Objectives

- Identify companies who have an inherent interest in natural resources, water, and watersheds.
- Work with companies to identify sponsorship models that work for them.
- Work with statewide conservation organizations to expand grantee capability to seek corporation investments in local projects.
- Reduce the risk of projects from the funder's perspective to encourage project investment. 

Activity Examples

Short-term (1-3 years)

- Map the landscape of natural resource funding around the state and identify areas for potential alignment.

Medium term (3-6 years)

- Partner with foundations to develop messages around the economic, environmental, and community values of conservation investments for corporations.

Long term (6-10 years)

- Identify new and innovative corporate investment strategies to better align with other funders.

Strategy 4.4




Partner to design strategies for complex conservation issues that can only be solved by seeking new and creative funding sources

Intent

Oregon needs to increase its investment for increasingly complex conservation and restoration needs. This will require creative thinking around funding opportunities that match the size and scale of Oregon's vision for healthy watersheds. It is likely the investment need will be far beyond OWEB and its current partners' ability to fund with existing dollars. Strong and diverse partnerships include the meaningful involvement of local, regional, and statewide organizations, public and private investors, government partners and experts from across Oregon.

Objectives

In collaboration with the Governor's office, state agencies and other partners:

- Identify areas ripe for large-scale investments.
- Clearly identify the size of the challenge and the time scale to address it with or without additional funding.
- Develop analysis approaches to prioritize investment needs at the regional and state scale. 

Activity Examples

Short Term (1-3 years)

- Identify areas of alignment between state climate change initiatives and OWEB funding.
- Partner to develop inventory, assessment, and prioritization approaches to identify water and other associated infrastructure needs.

Medium-Long Term (3-10 years)

- Identify additional areas of alignment for new and creative investment. 



Priority 5

The value of working lands is fully integrated into watershed health

What we mean

Oregon's natural resource industries - agriculture, forestry, fishing, recreation – are dependent on healthy watersheds for their sustainability, including on private lands. OWEB will develop strategies to help local partners engage broader participation among those who own and manage working lands. This includes working broadly with partners who own or manage working lands and conservation communities to develop intentional approaches that fully embrace the value of well-managed working lands to habitat, water quality, and local economies.

NOTE: "Working land" means land that is actively used by an agricultural or forest land owner or operator for an agricultural or forestland operation that includes, but need not be *limited* to, active engagement in farming, ranching or timber management.

Outcomes



- Generations of landowners continue to integrate conservation on their working lands while maintaining economic sustainability.
- Fully functioning working landscapes remain resilient into the future.
- Across the state, local partners have the resources necessary to better facilitate why and where restoration opportunities exist on working lands.
- Sustained vitality of Oregon's natural resources industries.



**Intent**

Working with partners and the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission, finalize rules, solicit for applications, and determine appropriate funding sources for working lands easements, management plans, and succession planning for agricultural landowners. Oregon's watersheds are intertwined with its people – the land is a part of our culture, our food and water, our work and our recreation. As a result, the well-being of all Oregonians depends on the health of our watersheds. Current and future generations need access to healthy watersheds. People and communities are an integral part of their watershed, just like fish and wildlife. A community's economic and social health comes from the health of the lands that surround them and the ability to draw enjoyment from clean water, open spaces, and natural habitats.

Objectives

- Establish a fully functioning Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission.
- Adopt rules governing grant programs for succession planning, covenants, easements, and technical assistance. 
- Determine funding needs for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program. Full implementation is funding-dependent. 

Activity Examples**Short Term (1-3 years)**

- Provide leadership for the Oregon Agricultural Heritage Commission.
- Facilitate the Commission's development of program rules.
- Implement surveys and otherwise solicit the level of interest in the granting programs under the Commission's purview to determine funding needs.
- Support existing and new land trusts, soil and water conservation districts and other working land easement partners as they work with landowners interested in the program.

**Intent**

The agency will start by learning from others with more experience and knowledge. This includes a commitment to continuous learning by understanding who our current grantees, partners and stakeholders are and clearly identifying the gaps in these areas and how they are represented. This is important to fully incorporate strong working lands approaches into OWEB's mission. Oregon's natural resource industries – agriculture, forestry, fishing, recreation – are dependent on healthy watersheds to be sustainable. The work of restoring natural areas creates jobs in communities, and the impact of a healthy watershed extends to all segments of Oregon's economy and is essential for the economic vitality of the state. When communities understand the link between healthy watersheds and a strong economy, they are more likely to invest in improving both.

Objectives

- Map the working lands community, defining landowner barriers to and motivations for implementing conservation.
- Develop a pathway to work with partners to increase working lands projects, and support technical assistance for owners and managers of working lands.
- Evaluate opportunities for incentives to increase landowner participation.

Continued 

Activity Examples

Short-term (1-3 years)

- Invest with grantees and working lands advocates to survey landowners to better understand their motivation and barriers to implementing conservation.
- Develop and design training and information sharing approaches.

Medium Term (3-6 years)

- Work with partners to develop a pathway to increase working lands projects.
- Work with partners to identify and support technical assistance opportunities for owners and managers of working lands.



Strategy 5.3

▲ Enhance the work of partners to increase working lands projects on farm, ranch and forestlands

Intent

There are many areas in the state where working lands strategies and habitat/water quality priorities intersect. A number of statewide agencies and organizations have strong connections with farmers, ranchers and forest land owners. OWEB will partner with those organizations (formally and informally) to increase landowner involvement in conservation – whether through a program or on their own. OWEB can continue to work with partners at the state and local level to identify strategic areas where the agency can focus its investments on that intersection, highlighting the compatibility of working lands conservation strategies.

Objectives

- Engage multi-agency resources to help target and develop assistance for landowners.
- Capitalize on opportunities to complement Oregon’s land use program with conservation investments.
- Increase partnerships with those who are implementing successful working land approaches.
- Create opportunities to increase incentives for landowner participation in working lands conservation based on learning from strategy 5.2.

Activity Examples

Medium Term (3-6 years)


- Train review teams about the value of working lands for conservation.
- Based on lessons learned from strategy 5.2, identify funding and funding gaps for working lands conservation projects.
- Convene resource specialists to help identify species, habitat and water quality needs/opportunities and where they intersect with working lands; share this information broadly.
- Establish and facilitate a state technical group to identify and recommend approaches to invest in technical support tools for local partners.

Strategy 5.4 Support technical assistance to work with owners/managers of working lands

Intent


While local organizations are very effective at working with farm, ranch and forest landowners, there are some landowners/managers who have not yet been engaged in conservation for a variety of reasons. OWEB can coordinate with other partners to help local organizations effectively engage new landowners in their community.

Objectives

- Increase available technical resources for landowners and managers of working lands.
- Develop funding mechanisms for long-term stewardship of working lands. 
- Support stakeholder engagement to better address the changing demographics of owners and managers of working lands in rural Oregon.

Activity Examples

Medium term (3-6 years)

- Facilitate assessment of technical assistance needs.
- Increase investment in technical assistance to grantees and working lands advocates.
- Design monitoring and evaluation strategies for working lands restoration. 

Long term (6-10 years)


- Develop technical assessment materials to meet the needs of specific audiences.

Strategy 5.5 Develop engagement strategies for owners and managers of working lands who may not currently work with local organizations

Intent

Landowner engagement is an important component to increase working lands projects to build understanding and support for the work as well as identify opportunities to work with interested land owners.

Objectives

- Engage community leaders to help build support and understanding for working lands conservation.
- Expand awareness or understanding of working lands conservation programs to owners and managers of working lands not currently engaged.
- Broadly communicate economic and conservation values of working lands conservation, emphasizing the balance of habitat, water quality, and landowner needs.
- Build and encourage a culture of conservation on working lands.
- Ensure consistent working lands conservation opportunities across the state. 

Activity Examples

- Additional activities will be developed based on lessons learned from strategy 5.2.



Priority 6

Coordinated monitoring and shared learning to advance watershed restoration effectiveness

What we mean

OWEB will develop greater capacity throughout the system of watershed stakeholders to monitor progress, learn from projects, track effectiveness, gather data, respond to data, and advance the cause of healthy, resilient watersheds through monitoring and evaluation. OWEB will work with partners to ensure frameworks to receive and share information exist. These frameworks will take advantage of the best scientific thinking and latest methods and technology in and outside the restoration community. OWEB and partners will develop monitoring “networks” to which organizations in all parts of the state can contribute.

Outcomes

- Decision-making at all levels is driven by insights derived from data and results.
- Limited monitoring resources are focused on appropriate, high-quality, prioritized monitoring being conducted by state/federal agencies and local organizations.
- Local organizations integrate monitoring goals into strategic planning.
- Evaluation of impact, not just effort, is practiced broadly.
- Impacts on ecological, economic and social factors are considered as a part of successful monitoring efforts.
- Partners are using results-based restoration “stories” to share conservation successes and lessons learned.
- Monitoring frameworks are developed and shared.
- Monitoring results that can be visualized across time and space are available at local, watershed and regional scales.





Intent

OWEB seeks to ensure all communities empower diverse stakeholders to design, implement, and evaluate collaborative conservation actions. Engaged community members are better able to adapt to new ideas, address new challenges and design new approaches to improve their watershed. When landowners, land managers and local citizens are actively involved in shared learning and leadership within local organizations, the capacity of communities to improve the health of their watersheds is expanded.

Objectives

- Coordinate with partners to tell the story of watershed work, progress, and impact.
- Improve understanding and awareness about how restoration benefits people.
- Identify clear and understandable restoration outcomes, including measures of both ecological and social/economic outcomes that describe the relevance of OWEB's investments to the public.

Activity Examples

Short term (1-3 years)

- Assess what information is readily available for tracking restoration results, outcomes, and impacts, and improve the quality and relevance of data collected as appropriate.
- Work with grantees and other local partners to identify the best ways to communicate outcomes.
- Build on existing processes for “telling the story” to effectively interpret scientific information and communicate results in ways that are meaningful to diverse audiences.

Medium-Long Term (3-10 years)

- Link refinements to OWEB's monitoring grant-making to OWEB's approach to “telling the story of restoration” and adaptively manage this work.
- Continue to explore new and diverse ways to use online and social media.
- Continue to build on successful awareness and communication efforts, expanding OWEB's ability to reach new or under-represented sectors or demographic groups.



Strategy 6.2 Invest in monitoring over the long term

Intent


Healthy, resilient watersheds provide clean water and a vibrant place to live for people, fish, and wildlife, now and in the future. OWEB's investments will result in measurable improvements that lead to healthier streams and upland habitat, while ensuring that the work of our grantees is resilient to long-term impacts of climate change and population dynamics. For effectiveness monitoring to be successful, there needs to be long-term sustained effort – or, at the very least, an ability to sample or measure indicators at appropriate time scales.

Objectives


- Help grantees develop realistic approaches for what to monitor, purpose, and timeframe.
- Explore coordinated monitoring approaches that provide monitoring capacity and technical support at appropriate and realistic scales of both geography and time.
- Consider how theory of change approaches can inform both restoration planning and strategies to track the effectiveness of restoration over the long term.
- Develop the ability to communicate the structure of a monitoring framework over the long term and its relevance to restoration practitioners, managers, and funders who are interested in better understanding status and trends and the effectiveness of restoration.

Activity Examples

Short-Medium term (2-4 years)

- Assess existing coordinated monitoring efforts and/or teams to understand how they have functioned.
- Evaluate past OWEB investments in paired restoration and large-scale monitoring, FIP monitoring, and long standing monitoring projects/programs. 

Long Term (5-10 years)

- Develop recommendations for the board about long-term investments in monitoring, and criteria for applicants to address the board priorities for long-term investments in monitoring. 

Strategy 6.3 Develop guidance and technical support for monitoring

Intent


Develop monitoring and adaptive management guidance to provide technical support.

Objectives

- Understand specific barriers and challenges to implementing successful monitoring efforts.
- Improve monitoring grant applications to meet local and state needs.
- Distill technical monitoring data into useable information for adaptive management.

Activity Examples

Short-Medium Term (1-5 years)

- Prioritize findings of OWEB's monitoring application guidance development process, develop a work plan for refining the agency's monitoring grant-making, and begin implementation of the plan. Example activities include:
- Compile and communicate lessons learned from past monitoring investments.
- Develop guidance documents for restoration and monitoring practitioners. 

Strategy 6.4



Increase communication between and among scientists and practitioners

Intent

Develop communication strategies to share results, incorporate scientific and technical information, including climate science information, into restoration planning, and support adaptive management by helping bridge the gap between research/monitoring and on-the-ground work.

Objectives

- Accelerate science/practitioner communication.
- Explore the value of the regional forums and/or networks to coordinate monitoring and encourage efficient and effective use of available resources for monitoring.
- Make scientific data and tools available to restoration practitioners.

Activity Examples

Medium-Term (3-5 years)

- Explore and support existing information-sharing venues to share results of research and monitoring, including workshops, symposia, regional monitoring gatherings, and peer exchanges.
- Share information about resources and tools available through existing regional networks.
- Continue to coordinate with other states on opportunities for action-specific monitoring partnerships.

Long-Term (5-10 years)

- Explore the value of helping to organize informal networks that include scientists/researchers, technical/monitoring experts, and restoration practitioners.

Strategy 6.5




Define monitoring priorities

Intent


Assess what OWEB wants to achieve through monitoring and then create the resources and tools necessary. Define appropriate monitoring scopes or scales. Consider the operational contexts to determine what is appropriate for any given partnership or organization.

Objectives

- Define appropriate scopes and/or scales for monitoring. 
- Integrate monitoring with other OWEB investments to ensure ecological outcomes can be quantified.
- Promote monitoring as a critical component of restoration work and identify other funding partners for this work.

Activity Examples

Medium-Term (3-5 years)

- Assess and define what OWEB wants to achieve through monitoring. 
- Review the findings from other strategies under the Coordinated Monitoring priority.


Long-Term (5-10 years)

- Draft monitoring priorities for consideration by the board.
- Use funding conversations with foundations and state agencies under Priority 4 to explore areas of common interest in funding monitoring, including assessment of other interested and willing funders.

Intent


Encourage state and federal agency partners to develop consistent approaches, clear goals, shared scope and scale for their watershed monitoring.

Objectives

- Partner with state and federal agency partners to develop consistent approaches, clear goals, shared scope, and scale for monitoring watershed restoration outcomes and impacts. 
- Partner with state agencies to increase interagency collaboration and develop a common vision for monitoring at a larger scale.
- Complement larger-scale monitoring planning with embedded approaches to help local partners identify lessons learned at a local scale and with relevance to localized decision-making.
- Strengthen integration of data collection across state and federal agencies.

Activity Examples

Medium-Term (3-5 years)

- Continue implementation of current monitoring efforts and evaluate the use of approaches that bridge larger-to-smaller scales.
- Evaluate existing monitoring strategies and consider their appropriateness as a foundation for developing a monitoring framework. 
- Share information with restoration and monitoring practitioners about existing and emerging data integration and visualization tools.

Long-Term (5-10 years)

- Develop tools and resources to encourage use of a consistent monitoring framework, methodologies, and tools by integrating these into OWEB's grant-making processes.
- Continue to support use and build-out of existing and emerging tools for: integrating data collection efforts; visualizing monitoring results at larger scales; and evaluating potential for more efficient monitoring on the ground.





Priority 7

Bold and innovative actions to achieve health in Oregon's watersheds

What we mean

OWEB will catalyze, support, and encourage the design and implementation of watershed health innovations by grant applicants. These innovations can reach beyond project implementation to touch all areas of OWEB's granting that support healthy watersheds – from capacity and partnership development to technical assistance, implementation, and monitoring. OWEB will continually weigh the agency's investment risk to encourage design and experimentation in watershed work while ensuring the public benefits from our investments.

Outcomes

- Multi-phased, high-complexity, and large geographic footprint restoration projects are underway.
- OWEB's investment approaches recognize the dual conservation and economic drivers and benefits of watershed actions, where appropriate.
- Diverse, non-traditional projects and activities that contribute to watershed health are now funded that weren't previously.
- Conservation communities value an experimental approach to learning and innovation.
- Conservation communities become comfortable with properties and projects that show potential, even if the work is not demonstrated based on proven past performance.
- OWEB becomes better able to evaluate risk.
- OWEB encourages a culture of innovation.



Philip Bayles

Strategy 7.1



Invest in landscape restoration over the long term

Intent

Expand funding opportunities for large-scale conservation efforts over multiple years, sharing risk amongst diverse partners.

Objectives

- Provide funding for landscape-scale restoration over the long term.
- Provide funding to support partnerships implementing landscape-scale restoration or identify other sources of capacity funding for partnerships.
- Share results of long-term efforts and lessons learned with the broader conservation community.
- Invest in capacity to develop projects that can be successfully implemented at the landscape scale.

Activity Examples

Short term (1-3 years)

- Continue to fund long-term activities that lead to landscape scale restoration.
- Develop evaluation processes for individual restoration grants that reward projects that may entail risk, but offer big potential upsides.

Medium term (3-6 years)

- Evaluate if other OWEB grant programs may be necessary to successfully invest in landscape scale restoration.

Strategy 7.2



Develop investment approaches in conservation that support healthy communities and strong economics

Intent

Develop appropriate investment approaches that recognize the dual conservation and economic drivers of watershed actions.

Objectives

- Identify new economic approaches that incentivize conservation.
- Clearly communicate to the public the economic benefits of restoration, while including the ecological benefits realized from well-managed working lands.

Activity Examples

Medium to long-term (4-10 years)



- Research cutting edge science that involves working lands and conservation outcomes.
- Identify economic impacts of healthy fish runs, water quality, and healthy watersheds.
- Develop resources that can help our partners in conservation communicate the economic benefits of restoration.



Intent

We will stimulate innovations and experimentations to adopt promising new practices throughout the conservation system. Once discoveries are made, we will provide insights from the learning to the conservation community for adoption and further experimentation.

Objectives

- Deliberately and nimbly invest in both programs/projects that are traditional (with predictable outcomes) and innovative (where more risk exists), sharing risk amongst diverse partners. 
- Convene partners to develop, then provide incentives for innovative ideas.
- Evaluate ways to allocate funding specifically for innovation. 
- Formally recognize that lessons learned are a part of a project's success.

Activity Examples

Short term (1-3 years)

- Capture lessons learned from restoration and partnership investments and share with restoration practitioners to identify areas for innovation and increased risk-taking.
- Develop approaches that allow grantees the space to clearly articulate risks and benefits of new and innovative approaches.
- Develop board and staff capacity to evaluate risk and to be able to weigh risk of innovation against proposed benefits.



The Freshwater Trust

OWEB Board and Staff

The ideas and efforts represented by this strategic plan are built upon the work of current and past OWEB members and partners and will be continued and further developed by those who have yet to join the team. Those listed below are board and staff members at the time of publication of this document.

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