



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

## Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

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## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board  
**FROM:** Meta Loftsgaarden, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** **Agenda Item K – OWEB Strategic Plan Update  
July 26-27, 2016 Board Meeting**

### I. Introduction

This report outlines a proposed timeline for OWEB's strategic planning process. This is an informational item only.

### II. Background

OWEB approved its last strategic plan in 2010; included as Attachment A to the staff report. This plan was completed during a time when the agency and its associated funding were set to sunset in 2015. However, at the same time, a campaign had begun to make the agency's funding permanent through Constitutional Ballot Measure 76. After the strategic plan was completed, Oregon voters overwhelmingly approved Ballot Measure 76.

As a result of the approval of permanent funding, the Board then undertook an effort in 2012-13 to develop a Long-Term Investment Strategy (LTIS) for granting, provided as Attachment B. This extensive process engaged stakeholders from across Oregon to set a vision for how the agency's strategic plan would be 'operationalized' through its granting investments. The LTIS was approved by the Board in 2013, and has become the framing through which the Board develops and approves its two-year spending plan in support of the strategic plan.

### III. Development of Strategic Plan

It has now been six years since the Board approved its last strategic plan and 2018 will be five years after approval of the LTIS. To assist the Board in its process for development of a new strategic plan, staff and the Board's executive committee are proposing a timeline and general process.

The proposal is contained in Attachment C and will be reviewed with the Board at the July Board meeting for discussion and feedback. Specifics will be developed in more detail once a facilitator is hired to assist with the process.

### IV. Recommendation

This is an informational item only.

### Attachments

- A. OWEB Strategic Plan
- B. OWEB Long-Term Investment Strategy
- C. Proposed Timeline for 2018 Strategic Plan Development



OREGON WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT BOARD

WORKING TOGETHER *for* HEALTHY WATERSHEDS

# STRATEGIC PLAN

JANUARY 2010

## MISSION

TO HELP PROTECT AND RESTORE HEALTHY WATERSHEDS AND NATURAL HABITATS  
THAT SUPPORT THRIVING COMMUNITIES AND STRONG ECONOMIES.

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No matter where you live in Oregon, you're in a watershed.

### Introduction

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) recently marked ten years as a state agency helping local communities take care of Oregon's streams, rivers, wetlands and natural areas. During that period, OWEB grants have funded thousands of projects to protect clean water and restore fish and wildlife habitat across the state. These projects involve voluntary partnerships that empower people to work together to solve problems in ways that create local jobs and result in healthier watersheds.

The OWEB Board has updated its strategic plan to guide grant investment priorities and deliver effective and accountable programs for our partners and the public. We encourage you to read our latest strategic plan. The five goals and nine strategies that follow represent high priority strategic guidance to continue our work on behalf of Oregon citizens.

Oregonians from many different walks of life are helping keep watersheds healthy—giving us clean water, healthy habitats and jobs. OWEB is proud to support this part of Oregon's ongoing conservation legacy.

We invite you to get involved in improving watershed health in your community.

[www.healthywatersheds.org](http://www.healthywatersheds.org)



## About Us

### Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) operates a grant program that helps Oregonians restore and protect rivers and wetlands – providing clean water and healthy habitat for native fish, wildlife and people. OWEB also monitors investments, manages watershed information, supports research, tracks progress in protecting clean water and restoring habitat, and reports on implementation of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds.

OWEB is led by a 17-member citizen board drawn from the public at large, tribes, and federal and state natural resource agency boards and commissions.

OWEB grants are funded with a small portion of Oregon Lottery dollars, federal dollars and salmon license plate revenue. By collaborating with citizens, volunteers and landowners in communities throughout the state, OWEB helps Oregonians care for Oregon's watersheds. Grant funds support projects that employ local contractors and labor crews and utilize local resources to create community and provide maximum value for public dollars.

### Vision

OWEB is a leader in the conservation of Oregon's natural resources and enjoys strong public support for its contributions to community-based conservation, watershed health, and local economies.

### OWEB supports voluntary efforts that result in:

- Projects that restore and protect natural processes and functions of watersheds;
- A statewide network of watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, and other local groups that develop and implement restoration projects;
- Citizen awareness of watershed issues and participation in restoration and protection actions;
- Strong and lasting partnerships to address complex natural resources issues; and
- Jobs and the purchase of goods and services in local communities.



*Data from 1999-2010.*



## Goals and Strategies

The OWEB Board has established the following goals and strategies in support of OWEB's mission and vision. The five goals and nine strategies that follow represent high priority strategic guidance to continue our work on behalf of Oregon's citizens. In order to effectively consider and implement the strategies and actions identified below, OWEB staff have developed work plans and aligned staff workload to achieve vision-driven priorities. Measures of progress and success will be developed, and aligned with currently required reporting measures.

### Goal 1

#### Adaptive Investment

Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through investments that enhance watershed functions and support community needs.

#### *Strategies*

1. Maintain and enhance restoration and protection programs that focus on watershed and ecosystem functions and processes, support sustainable working landscapes, and empower community-based conservation to address economic, social and environmental health.
2. Implement monitoring and research programs to build knowledge and strengthen feedback about OWEB investments and critical uncertainties to support adaptive management for outcome improvements.

OWEB funds a mix of programs and projects across the state with many partners. Population growth and climate change will affect communities around the state and the watershed processes and functions upon which those communities (and fish and wildlife) depend. These driving forces are significant and their impact is uncertain. The key to achieving OWEB's vision is an adaptive, principled and well-structured investment strategy. OWEB has developed tools to assist partners in the strategic development of restoration or conservation projects, such as the priorities for land acquisition developed in 2004. In 2003, the Board adopted a far-reaching and long-term strategy to guide coordinated monitoring efforts under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, which led to the implementation of effectiveness monitoring. OWEB also manages the Oregon Watershed Restoration Inventory (OWRI), which has tracked completed restoration work since 1995. OWEB will continue to improve its data systems with a specific focus on data sharing with project partners and the public.



**Goal 2**

**Local Infrastructure Development**

Support an enduring, high-capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

*Strategies*

1. Establish and articulate policies related to the support and development of a diverse local infrastructure for watershed restoration.
2. Evaluate and adjust watershed council support grant review and funding processes to build local capacity, provide base funding, and promote strategic partnerships.
3. Provide technical assistance to build capacity, secure additional funding and increase local organizational resilience.

Watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts, and other non-governmental organizations are key partners in implementing OWEB programs. They play a critical role in working with interested landowners to design projects, apply for grants, implement projects, monitor results, and provide local watershed education. The work of all these partners also provides significant community and economic benefits. Success of OWEB's mission and vision requires these partners to have sufficient capacity and funding to continue and enhance their work. OWEB continues to explore the best ways to help support a high-capacity infrastructure.

**Goal 3**

**Public Awareness and Involvement**

Provide information to help Oregonians understand the need for and engage in activities that support healthy watersheds.

*Strategies*

1. Make Oregonians aware of the importance of healthy watersheds and inform them, in broad strokes, of what has been accomplished on their behalf through the work of OWEB and others.
2. Encourage and facilitate greater exploration and knowledge for those Oregonians who seek greater involvement in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

All Oregonians appreciate and recognize the value of clean, abundant water. Few Oregonians recognize that clean, abundant water depends on functioning watersheds or identify the critical link between investments in watershed conservation and clean, abundant water and healthy populations of fish and wildlife. It is important to expand the awareness that land and water management actions can improve and/or protect water quality. Healthy watersheds require an informed public that supports fish and wildlife habitat protection, well-managed river corridors, agricultural and forest land stewardship and urban land and water management. OWEB has over a decade of projects and programs that illustrate the linkages between ecosystem health and community and economic sustainability. The more people know about the public investments in watershed health and the benefits of those investments, the more they will value them and support continued funding of those efforts.



#### Goal 4

### Partnership Development

Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and private landowners for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

#### *Strategy*

1. Identify new and expand existing strategic partnerships that leverage OWEB funds and knowledge to achieve healthy watershed and community outcomes.

OWEB complements the regulatory and land management programs of state and federal agencies and local governments with voluntary watershed restoration by private landowners and others. OWEB's grant-based, non-regulatory program requires a high level of coordination and collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies, tribes, and organizations. Partnerships are a required element for all OWEB investments. Partnerships range from the matching funds for individual grants to institutional arrangements to implement federally developed programs. Criteria for evaluating formal partnerships has been developed and adopted by the Board.

#### Goal 5

### Efficient and Accountable Administration

Ensure efficient and accountable administration of all investments.

#### *Strategy*

1. Continue to evaluate, explore and implement grant administrative processes to maintain and enhance efficiencies at all levels.

OWEB's core function is the administration of a competitive grant program, which has experienced significant growth in the number of grants and funding award amounts over the past ten years. The timely, accurate, and transparent administration of all aspects of the program is an everyday activity for all OWEB staff. This approach benefits the agency and its partners by providing streamlined processes and necessary resources to carry out watershed and habitat restoration and conservation in a prompt and responsible manner. OWEB will continue to focus on this important goal and look for opportunities for advancement and improvement while balancing and supporting flexibility, innovation, and adaptive management. OWEB is in constant communication with staff to determine the most effective ways to carry out its business. A staff review is conducted following each grant cycle to develop recommended improvements. In addition to internal processes, OWEB also benefits from third-party reviews of its work. OWEB's grant process, files, and expenditures are audited every other year by the Secretary of State, and OWEB has received a favorable audit each time.



More Information

### What is a watershed?

A “watershed” is an area of land that drains into a lake, wetland, stream or river. In Oregon, no matter where you live, you’re in a watershed.

Watersheds even exist where water doesn’t flow into a stream or river. In desert areas, watersheds drain into lakes and wetlands providing important habitat for plants and animals. Throughout Oregon, healthy watersheds are vital to people, fish and wildlife. What happens upstream has a direct impact on all of the water downstream.

### Oregon’s Conservation Legacy — A Unique Approach

Oregonians should be proud of their unique approach to enhancing and maintaining the state’s watersheds. Their collective care and appreciation for the state’s natural places and working landscapes has created a strong and enduring legacy of conservation in Oregon. Looking back, Oregon’s conservation legacy is embodied in milestone actions involving incentives for recycling (the bottle bill), protecting unique and special places for the public to enjoy (the beach bill), and the development of land use planning laws to protect important land uses and prevent unchecked urban sprawl.



*OWEB’s investments are the critical link between investments in watershed conservation and clean abundant water and healthy populations of fish and wildlife.*

### Cooperative Voluntary Conservation

The most recent expression of Oregon’s conservation legacy has been quietly and effectively taking place in communities around the state for over a decade. Local groups—primarily watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts—are engaging farmers, ranchers, foresters, and other landowners to voluntarily work with other partners to take actions on their properties that help restore and protect our natural environment. Together, these local cooperative actions are writing the most recent chapter to Oregon’s conservation legacy.



**OWEB**

*No matter where you live in Oregon, you're in a watershed.  
Our lakes, rivers and streams are the lifeblood of our environment.  
OWEB helps Oregonians restore and protect our watersheds.*

**[WWW.OREGON.GOV/OWEB](http://WWW.OREGON.GOV/OWEB)**

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## Developing the Proposed Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation



## OREGON WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT BOARD Proposed Direction for OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation

**DRAFT FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

**OWEB invites public feedback and discussion** on its proposed direction for the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation. OWEB's Board will consider public input prior to making a decision, currently planned for the June 2013 Board meeting. For more information, please visit our website [www.oregon.gov/OWEB](http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB).

### Guiding Principles

for the development and implementation of the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation

#### 1. Build on accomplishments

OWEB values the commitment and work of our local partners, which has resulted in a nationally and internationally recognized approach with unmatched environmental accomplishments. OWEB wishes to build on this foundation while working toward the future.

#### 2. Effective communication

OWEB realizes that successful cooperative conservation can only occur when ideas, priorities and results are communicated with all partners and potential partners. OWEB is committed to active, two-way communication with its staff, partners and the public as a means for developing and maintaining a strong investment strategy.

#### 3. Transparency

OWEB values transparency and develops its Long-Term Investment Strategy through an open, transparent process that involves input and dialogue with stakeholders and staff.

#### 4. Maximize service, minimize disruption

In developing the Long-Term Investment Strategy, the Board considers how OWEB's grant portfolio impacts partner organizations and staff resources to maximize effectiveness without adversely affecting service delivery.

#### 5. Responsive

The Long-Term Investment Strategy will adjust to changes in revenue and be responsive to changes in ecological priorities from the Governor, Legislature, the Board and local partners.

#### 6. Adapt based on monitoring and evaluation

OWEB's staff and Board monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of the Long-Term Investment Strategy to assure it is meeting the Board's desired goals and outcomes. As needed, the Board shall adapt and modify the strategy to improve overall investment success.

#### 7. Phase-in Change

OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy will guide us in our future efforts and will be periodically revisited. It is designed to implement any changes over a reasonable period necessary to phase-in any changes and allow adjustment by stakeholders and OWEB staff.

### Background

#### Mission

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

#### About Us

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board is a state agency that provides grants to help Oregonians take care of local streams, rivers, wetlands and natural areas. Community members and landowners use scientific criteria to decide jointly what needs to be done to conserve and improve rivers and natural habitat in the places where they live. OWEB grants are funded from the Oregon Lottery, federal dollars and salmon license plate revenue. The agency is led by a 17 member citizen board drawn from the public at large, tribes and federal and state natural resource agency boards and commissions.

#### What is the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation?

The purpose of the Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation is to identify how OWEB desires to structure its grant portfolio to achieve its mission, priorities and ecological outcomes.

Please refer to pages 3 and 4 for more information about the proposal.

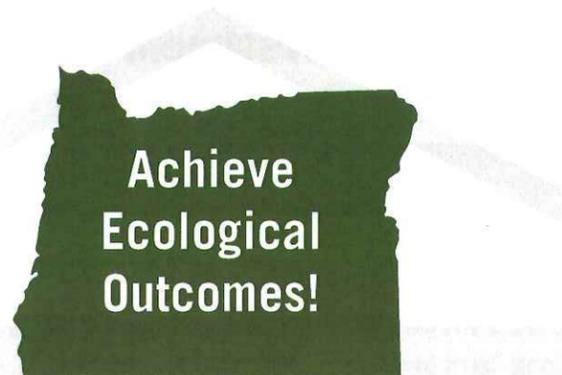
#### Why a Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation?

With the passage of Measure 76, the time is right for OWEB to evaluate our course and seek ways to improve. Until recently, it was unclear whether OWEB's principle source of funding would be available after 2014. Permanent funding under Measure 76 creates the opportunity to look long-term.

The investment strategy will guide the Board's programs and granting decisions.

# Framework for Grant Investments

## The Three Pillars



All of OWEB's investments in ecological outcomes have helped build communities and support the local economy. The draft investment strategy is based on the three key pillars which have been the foundation of OWEB's investments as described below.

### Operating Capacity Investments

#### These grants

- Support the operating costs of effective watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts.
- Are performance and outcome-based.
- Contain high standards for eligibility, reporting and accountability.

#### Reason for this investment

Councils and districts are identified specifically in OWEB's statutes because they are essential leaders in the development and implementation of voluntary collaborative conservation projects to protect native fish and wildlife habitat, watersheds and water quality.

#### Currently:

Watershed councils are locally established voluntary organizations; OWEB may provide grants for council operating capacity.

Soil and water conservation districts are local government entities overseen by the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA). District operating capacity grants are administered by ODA, but funded with OWEB dollars.

### Open Solicitation Investments

#### These grants

- Respond to locally selected ecological priorities based on local, state, and regional conservation strategies and plans.
- Are competitive.
- Are offered in regular cycles with ongoing availability across the state.

#### Reason for this investment

- Encourage a statewide culture of voluntary, collaborative conservation.
- Support a wide variety of ecological outcomes in all parts of the state.

#### Currently include:

- Regular Grants (Restoration, Land and Water Acquisition, Technical Assistance, Monitoring, Outreach, Watershed Assessment)
- Small Grants
- ODA Weed Grants
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
- CREP Technical Assistance

### Focused Investments

#### These grants

- Support collaboratively prioritized ecological outcomes selected by the OWEB Board.
- Are outcome-based and outcome-measured.
- Commit funding for multiple years.
- Move around the state as ecological priorities and leveraging opportunities intersect.

#### Reason for this investment

- Provide greater certainty for OWEB and partners in making progress toward collaboratively identified and prioritized ecological outcomes.
- Better leveraging of private, federal and other state/local funding for a longer, more sustained time frame.

#### Currently include:

- Ecosystem Services
- Effectiveness Monitoring
- Research
- Special Investment Partnerships
- Whole Watersheds Restoration Initiative

# Proposal for OWEB's Long-Term Investment Strategy for Conservation

## Operating Capacity Investments

Continue this investment area.

#### Proposed changes

- OWEB is updating its council capacity grant program, and plans to propose changes for Board decision in 2014.
- ODA is revising its grant administration for the soil and water conservation districts.

#### Reason for proposal

Continue to hold grantees to high standards of effectiveness with the expectation of continual improvement.

## Open Solicitation Investments

Continue this investment area.

#### Proposed changes

- **Small grants:** increase funding and expand types of grants beyond restoration (for example, outreach and monitoring small grants).
- **Regular restoration grants:** caps on individual applications as a way to fund more projects across the state.
- Develop a new process for "**big ticket, large cost**" restoration projects.
- Develop an **outreach grant strategy**, including partnering with other outreach funders to leverage additional investment.

#### Reason for proposal

Maintain or expand the grant opportunities for local projects, even if the amount of funding for Open Solicitation Investments does not increase, or is reduced over time.

## Focused Investments

Continue this investment area.

#### Proposed changes

- Phase-in a gradual **increase in this investment area over time**.
- Develop criteria and process for Board selection of collaboratively prioritized ecological outcomes.
- Update criteria and process and improve transparency of Board decisions around Focused Investments, including clear time limits.

#### Reason for proposal

With committed funding over multiple years, Focused Investments provide greater certainty for OWEB and partners in making progress toward collaboratively prioritized ecological outcomes. The increased state emphasis on 10-year outcomes makes it important for OWEB to invest in more certain progress, and to develop clear criteria and process for prioritized ecological outcomes.

### Potential Benefits & Consequences of OWEB's Proposed Direction

While OWEB's funding now has long-term status, grant funds will vary over time and will be affected by state and federal budget decisions.

Depending on funding availability, increases in investments in one area may have impact on other areas of investment.

OWEB is interested in your thoughts on the benefits and consequences of these proposed changes.

Investment in the following areas provides support and accountability to the above:

### Competitive Offering for Emerging Issues

New grant offering.

- Develop criteria, structure and process.
- Consider activities appropriate for one-time/short term funding that are consistent with OWEB's mission, but do not qualify under OWEB's other grant programs.
- Examples include conservation efforts that require short-term assistance for planning or research, and pilot funding for innovative approaches to natural resources management.

#### Reason for proposal:

OWEB has invested in emerging issues in the past. It is important to have clear structure, criteria and process to guide decisions on funding requests.

### Focused Effectiveness Monitoring & Reporting

Continue to conduct board-directed effectiveness monitoring for selected types of Open Solicitation grants.

#### Proposed change

- Include effectiveness monitoring in all of OWEB's Focused Investments.

#### Reason for proposal

Outcomes are foundational to sound investments and adaptive management. It is important to tell the story of accomplishments from OWEB's investments.

## Contact Us

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# Strategic Plan Timeline

Board Meeting  
 All Staff Meeting  
 Strategic Plan Retreat  
 Stakeholder Advisory Group Involvement

