

MINUTES

Oregon Sustainability Board



Meeting Date: September 19, 2024

Time: 9:30 am to 2:30 pm

Location: Zoom and Hearts of Health Integrated Care Center, 606 Medical Pkwy, Enterprise, OR 97828

Attendees: OSB: Rex Burkholder (Chair), Johanna Anderson, Webly Bowles, Tanea Browning, Serena Dietrich, Autumn Wilburn, Josh Proudfoot, Elin Shepard, Tom Kelly
DAS: Steven Markham, Jeni Hall

Guest Presenters: Torrey Simms, DEIB Manager, DAS; Jeremy Miller, DAS EAM Deputy Administrator; Lisa Dawson, NEOEDD; Jennifer Piper, Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce; Todd Nash, Wallowa County Board of Commissioners; Grace Donovan, Rural Engagement and Vitality Center

Welcome

9:30 - 9:45 am

Meeting called to order. Review of agenda.

DAS Sustainability Updates

9:45 - 10:00 am

The DAS Sustainability Plan, last updated in 2018, is currently under review. A new version is expected by December 2024. Key Focus: Data collection and analysis to track energy usage and sustainability progress. DAS has initiated the DAS-ODOE Interagency Energy Meetings (ODIEM) to improve energy efficiency across state buildings.

DAS Office of Cultural Change, Torrey Simms

10:00 - 10:45 am

Torrey introduced DAS's DEIB initiatives and emphasized the importance of community engagement and demographic representation in workforce and contracts. Data regarding DEIB progress will be shared through the DAS procurement equity workgroup, and they can present at a future meeting.

Board members highlighted the need for clear data and transparency, particularly in how agencies engage marginalized communities.

Agency sustainability plan/progress updates and panel discussion: OWRD, OWEB, ODA

10:45 am-12:00 pm

OWRD

The agency focuses on managing water rights transactions, especially when property changes ownership, and ensures public safety through well construction and dam safety programs. They pay particular attention to smaller, private dams that help retain water and protect downstream users.

Sustainability efforts aim to balance present and future water needs by incorporating social, environmental, and economic considerations. The agency is working on digitizing operations to reduce paper usage and enhance record-keeping. They are also adopting electronic signatures and recycled materials to increase

sustainability within the organization. Their building is LEED Gold-certified, reflecting a commitment to energy efficiency, earthquake safety, and reduced water and electricity consumption. The agency is also focused on vehicle and fleet management, replacing older vehicles with more fuel-efficient ones, as field staff increasingly need to travel for water law enforcement.

Groundwater management has become a priority, particularly in areas like Harney County where groundwater levels are declining due to extensive irrigation. The agency is conducting a major rulemaking process to establish critical groundwater areas. Additionally, they are collaborating with law enforcement to address illegal water usage, especially for unauthorized cannabis farming.

DEIB initiatives are being integrated across the agency by translating materials into different languages and updating interview processes to promote diversity. The agency is also addressing the impacts of climate change on water resources, focusing on long-term strategies to balance supply and demand in the face of increased agricultural needs and shrinking water availability.

OWEB

Discussed the agency's transition from focusing solely on salmon restoration to a broader approach, including watershed restoration from "ridge to ridge". Highlighted the agency's new programs, expanding into drinking water quality and other benefits beyond salmon restoration. Key future expansion will be the Environmental Restoration Council, which will manage a \$580 million settlement fund. Explained OWEB's grant systems, including online submissions, reducing paper usage. Detailed the technical review process and collaboration with the board for grant approvals. Mentioned ongoing consultation with grantees, ensuring projects align with long-term sustainability goals. Discussed new funding for carbon sequestration, with \$10 million allocated across four state agencies. Includes \$2.5 million administered by OWEB for restoration and technical assistance grants and \$750,000 to fund agricultural carbon sequestration practices, such as cover crops. Emphasis on equity, with funds targeted toward tribes and environmental justice communities.

ODA

Presented the ODA's new strategic plan for 2024-2027, emphasizing that sustainability and resilience are core themes. Highlighted the importance of assisting agricultural communities in making informed business decisions. Outlined the establishment of a DEIB committee in 2019 to ensure all community voices are heard. Emphasized strategies include communication, education and training, removing barriers to access.

Update on actions taken in 2023/2024: The relocation of laboratories to the DAS Wilsonville facility, completed in February. Anticipated decreased electricity consumption due to reduced operational needs. Plans to address aging fleet issues, seeking hybrid vehicles for Eastern Oregon staff while exploring options for electric vehicles as charging infrastructure improves. Discussed the implementation of hybrid work options to reduce commuting emissions and support sustainability goals. Highlighted key challenges facing

Discussed ongoing threats from the Emerald Ash Borer to riparian conservation investments. The need for robust public engagement to fill knowledge gaps related to water resources and agriculture. Emphasis on federal funds for supporting smart agricultural practices, particularly in the context of climate change.

Board Feedback

Expressed support for focusing on sustainability impacts beyond operational footprints, such as encouraging grant applicants to adopt sustainable practices. Highlighted the importance of programmatic impacts in achieving long-term community goals.

Expressed support for ODA's commitment to sustainability and DEIB initiatives. Suggested the need for developing clear metrics to assess the success of sustainability programs. Discussed the importance of adapting agricultural practices considering climate change impacts.

Building and Portfolio Utilization: Oregon's public assets are split roughly 50-50 between private leases and state-owned buildings, covering a total of 9.3 million square feet. Utilization rates show that only 31% of the state's real estate is being effectively used, compared to the industry standard of 65%. Many facilities, including laboratory spaces and data centers, show higher occupancy and usage rates (75%-100%). **Goals and Strategic Shifts:** DAS aims to reduce the state's overall footprint by 30% by 2027, with an optimistic projection of potentially exceeding that goal, targeting 40%-45%. The focus is on core state-owned assets in Salem, Portland, Eugene, and Pendleton without significantly disrupting the private market. Priority is placed on optimizing executive branch facilities and avoiding undue economic impact on private landlords in smaller communities. **Adoption of Hybrid Work:** DAS emphasizes the advantages of hybrid work, including reduced emissions, cost-sharing between agencies, and efficient use of office space (e.g., shared workstations, meeting rooms, and infrastructure). Agencies are co-locating in shared spaces to improve efficiency. Hybrid workers (in the office less than three days per week) do not have dedicated cubicles or offices, helping reduce unnecessary office space usage. **Sustainability Initiatives:** The state is integrating energy-efficient solutions, such as heat pumps, solar arrays, LED lighting with sensors, and improved HVAC controls. Projects are increasingly focusing on reducing carbon footprints and ensuring sustainable resource usage in renovations and daily operations. **Furniture and Materials Repurposing:** As part of space reduction efforts, old furniture is being repurposed, relocated, or donated instead of being sent to landfills. Contracts with companies like Herman Miller allow for recycling and repurposing furniture from buildings that no longer need it due to footprint reduction. **Indoor Air Quality and Other Improvements:** Enhanced indoor air quality measures, including upgrading filtration systems and using low volatile organic compound (VOC) materials, have been implemented in state buildings. Energy-saving initiatives, like the installation of LED lights and advanced plug controls, have been rolled out across most of the state's major buildings.

Future Adaptations and Flexibility: The DAS strategy is to maintain flexibility in office design to accommodate any potential future changes in work culture or governmental policies. Space design guidelines and policies have been created to guide future utilization, allowing for the easy adjustment of office spaces and furniture based on needs.

Success Stories: Several projects were highlighted, such as the consolidation of Department of Justice leases and office spaces in Salem's 550 building, saving over \$2.1 million annually. The North Valley complex in Wilsonville is another success, where collaborative lab space and office areas have reduced redundancy and improved cross-agency cooperation.

Board Feedback

Several board members raised concerns about potential negative impacts on the commercial real estate market, especially regarding reduced leasing activity due to the state's footprint reduction. DAS acknowledged these concerns but noted that disruptions to private landlords have been minimal so far, with ongoing efforts to mitigate local economic impacts.

Staffing and Housing Issues: Businesses in Wallowa County are facing difficulties in attracting and retaining employees due to limited housing availability. The chamber continues to focus on promoting local businesses and tourism, while communicating key issues to state agencies.

Rural Engagement and Vitality Center (Eastern Oregon University Community-Driven Initiatives): The Center connects university resources with rural communities, providing expertise in governance, planning, and natural resource management. Recent projects include forest land management economic impact studies and urban-rural divide explorations. **Student Involvement:** The program involves students in hands-on experiences, showing them the opportunities within their own communities, with the aim of retaining talent in the region. **Housing and Planning Support:** Discussed a **buildable lands inventory** for the City of Joseph and ongoing work with the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to address housing shortages. The regional innovation hub, in collaboration with Blue Mountain Community College, will provide mentorship and business services to small businesses.

Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program

Program Success - Entrepreneurship for Rural Teens: Teaches juniors and seniors how to create, launch, and run their own for-profit businesses. Participants keep the profits they generate. About 30% of program alumni have returned to Wallowa County, with some starting successful businesses. **Challenges in Expansion:** Frustration over the difficulty in expanding the program to other rural communities due to a lack of funding. She noted that economic development agencies have not provided sufficient support. Proving underserved status is a significant barrier to receiving funds, it complicates the process unnecessarily and excludes many potential participants.

Working Homes (Wallowa Resources) – Housing Challenges Affordable Housing Issues: Wallowa County faces an acute housing shortage, with 25% of homes vacant and many being second homes or vacation rentals. This exacerbates workforce retention issues, as new hires cannot find affordable housing. **Working Homes** aims to provide affordable housing for workers, focusing on middle-income residents. The program has faced challenges in accessing capital and land, but some progress has been made in securing buildable lots through community support.

Discussion Highlights and Board Feedback

1. **Economic Barriers and Equity:**
 - The Board engaged in a discussion about barriers to equitable access to programs, especially those requiring proof of underserved status. Some members advocated for reducing these barriers to increase participation, particularly in programs like Mentor Match.
2. **Housing and Workforce Retention:**
 - Housing availability continues to be a pressing issue across the region, directly impacting businesses' ability to attract and retain employees. The discussion also touched on sustainable housing solutions, such as energy-efficient homes and support from organizations like St. Vincent's.
3. **Regional Collaboration:**
 - Multiple speakers emphasized the importance of collaboration among regional organizations, state agencies, and local businesses to address systemic issues like housing, economic development, and sustainability.

4. Program Evaluation and Expansion:

- The Board encouraged a broader evaluation of how programs like Mentor Match could be expanded statewide, emphasizing the importance of providing equitable access to resources for all communities.

Other Board Business: Wrap-up and Adjourn (followed by optional field trip)

2:30pm - 2:45 pm

Action Items:

- Jeni to send out meeting items and follow up via email.
- DAS to draft feedback letters from OSB to agencies participating on panel.
- OSB to touch base with solar presenter to find links between affordable housing and green energy.

DRAFT