State Land Board appoints interim State Lands director at Feb. 13 public meeting

Salem – The State Land Board today voted unanimously to appoint Vicki Walker as the interim director of the Department of State Lands (DSL).

Current DSL director Jim Paul will leave the agency at the end of February to take a position as Assistant Director for Administrative Services at the Oregon Department of Corrections.

Walker served as the Oregon State Director for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development from November 2009 to January 2017. While at USDA, Walker oversaw the investment of $4.8 billion for more than 24,000 projects that helped rural Oregonians. Projects included helping low-income rural residents purchase and repair homes; building or maintaining 200 low-income apartment complexes; and assisting 900 rural businesses expand operations.

Before her work at the USDA, Walker served for ten years in the Oregon Legislature (2003 to 2009), and as the administrator of the Oregon Board of Parole and Post-Prison Supervision in 2009.

Gov. Kate Brown, chair of the Land Board, praised the selection of Walker, saying “Vicki Walker thinks outside the box, and has always paid careful attention to how every taxpayer dollar is spent. Her previous experience at the helm of an agency and proven ability to manage change will serve her and the department well.”

In other business, the Land Board approved the department’s three proposed legislative concepts; received reports on the agency’s Aquatic Resource Management and Real Property Programs, and the annual Department of Forestry report on Common School Fund Forest Lands. Director Paul also provided an update on the Elliott State Forest Public Ownership Project.

The Land Board recognized Paul for his seven years of service, and thanked him for his guidance through many tough issues over his tenure. They also recognized Cynthia Wickham, Deputy Director for Administration, who is retiring at the end of February, and who served for 22 years at DSL.

The State Land Board consists of Governor Kate Brown, Secretary of State Dennis Richardson and State Treasurer Tobias Read. The Department of State Lands administers diverse natural and fiscal resources. Many of the resources generate revenue for the Common School Fund, such as state-owned rangelands.
and timberlands, waterway leases, estates for which no will or heirs exist, and unclaimed property. Twice a year, the agency distributes fund investment earnings to support K-12 public schools. The agency also administers Oregon’s Removal-Fill Law, which requires people removing or filling certain amounts of material in waters of the state to obtain a permit.

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