

State Board of Agriculture
Integrated Water Resources Planning Grants
Oregon Cattlemen's Association's Public Comment

December 5, 2019

Since HB 2084 was proposed, the Oregon Cattlemen's Association has supported the allocation of funds to complete pilot projects for place-based planning related to water resources. The place-based planning program was created to fill a critical need for communities to engage in in-depth, thoughtful planning for their water future, ensuring that a long-term plan is in place to meet community, economic, and habitat needs.

Since its inception, OCA's members have engaged heavily in the pilot projects, investing significant time and resources into this effort, and OCA strongly supports providing these communities with a path to complete their plans and share their lessons learned with the State. OCA believes these communities will be stronger and better able to work together after the time and effort they've put into this process.

However, in observing how each of the pilot projects moved forward, we think communities will have significant "lessons learned" and recommendations to share with the State after the conclusion of their processes. This feedback must be considered prior to moving forward with any additional projects and should be provided as part of a comprehensive program review. This review should include not only the lessons from the four pilot projects, but a review of the scope of the program and a review of other complementary state programs in order to ensure that any funding from this program is complementary to and not duplicative of other state programs that exist. For example, if this program is going to continue focusing efforts on water quality and ecosystem issues rather than water supply planning, we question whether the Oregon Water Resources Department is the appropriate entity to manage the grant funds, and whether the program may be duplicative of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board's Focused Investment Partnerships Grant Program.

After completion of the pilots, we would also like to discuss where the State's money is best invested around water supply planning, including how to ensure that the place-based planning program is comprehensive enough to be useful to communities but limited enough to be manageable and achievable. In their November meeting, the Oregon Water Resources Commission discussed its Planning Step 5 Draft Guidance for State recognition of place-based plans. The review criteria focus on whether the individual pilot projects have satisfied the requirements for place-based planning. The question remains, however, regarding what happens after the State approves a plan. OCA believes a further review of the program itself is necessary to ensure funding adequately addresses local water supply planning concerns, and that the Oregon Water Resources Department is managing the program effectively and efficiently to prevent duplication with other funding programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration of OCA's comments.

Sincerely,

Jerome Rosa

Executive Director, Oregon Cattlemen's Association