

Agenda Item No.:	B
Work Plan:	Administrative
Topic:	Board Governance Performance Self-Evaluation
Presentation Title:	2025 Board Governance Performance Self-Evaluation
Date of Presentation:	June 4, 2025
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SUMMARY

The Board of Forestry has completed its annual self-evaluation for 2025 using its adopted governance performance measure.

CONTEXT

The governance performance measure for state boards and commissions, “percent of total best practices met by the board” was enacted by the Oregon State Legislature and adopted by the Board in 2006. The measure includes fifteen standard best practices criteria tailored to meet the Board’s specific needs and interests. The Board added an additional criterion relating to public involvement and communications, and open-ended summary questions to the evaluation. The measure is included in the agency’s annual Key Performance Measures and has been conducted every year since 2008 and recently incorporated into the *Board Policies Manual for the Oregon Board of Forestry, Version 1.0* dated March 6, 2024, as Part 3.12.2 Board Performance Evaluation.

In spring, board members annually complete their individual self-evaluations utilizing the Board Governance Performance Measure Best Management Practices Self-Evaluation Criteria. A summary of the 2025 self-evaluation of the Board’s 2024 performance is attached. The Board is asked to consider alternatives in their review of the evaluation and agree upon a rating for submission in our agency’s *Annual Performance Progress Report*.

Further discussion on the Board’s annual performance review and best practices in board governance has traditionally occurred during the board’s October planning retreat and new board member orientations; however, this practice has not been considered for the board’s engagements since the fall of 2022.

ANALYSIS

The annual evaluation survey was open to board members for one month during April with regular updates of completion status shared. Six of the six board members serving in the 2024 calendar period completed the evaluation. The seventh member of the board recently started their term in spring of 2025 with planned engagement in the next year’s review.

Results of the evaluation suggest that the board members see the Board functioning in a less than satisfactory manner. The Board was unable to meet their performance target of 100% for the

2024 evaluation period only finding common agreement in reaching 71% of their best practices as compared to the prior year's evaluation of 84%. This is notably the lowest percentage recorded.

The board members did fully agree they met a few of the best practices in governance including:

- completion of the Board's strategic vision for the agency mission and high-level goals,
- periodic review of the agency's key financial information and audit findings, and
- board members valuing public input and transparency in conducting their work through outreach and engagement of stakeholders, standing advisory committees, special ad hoc committees and panels, and external committees with board interests.

In several of the best practices, four or more board members agreed they had met the criteria, while one or two members disagreed, specifically related to:

- defined performance expectations for the State Forester,
- annual review of the agency's key performance measures in the *Annual Performance Progress Report*,
- appropriate involvement in review of key policy communications and policy-making activities,
- review of the proposed biennial budget at the Agency Request Budget level,
- agency adherence to accounting rules and financial controls,
- board members responsibly serving as public representatives, attending appropriate training and technical information sessions, engaging in collaborative coordination and efficient work where responsibilities and interests overlap with other state and federal agencies and tribal nations, and
- implementing adaptive management effectively to ensure best practices are utilized beyond the planning and evaluation cycles.

Governance best practices where three or more board members disagreed with meeting the criteria include:

- completion of a recent performance evaluation of the State Forester,
- aligning the agency's policy option packages with their mission and goals through the biennial budgeting process, and
- appropriately accounting for resources of the agency including engagement in critical issues relating to oversight of human, financial, material and facilities resources, and briefings on matters of succession management, vacancies, budget, or financial effects of the fire program.

Reflections from the board members indicate concern with interference and balancing of the Governor's Natural Resources Office engagement in areas of the Board's responsibility; polarization and challenges associated with controversial forest policy issues, interpersonal

dynamics, and misleading media stories; limitations imposed by strict public meeting rules that affect the Board's ability to collaboratively work through complex matters; a need to operationalize the Board's *Vision for Oregon's Forests*; greater communication and engagement desired between the agency and Board in areas of policy-making, budgetary development, and changes in accounting for agency resources; a desire for proactive coordination with other agencies and boards; and a need for strong Board leadership and facilitation.

ALTERNATIVES

There are two distinct alternatives to be considered for the Board's completion of this year's self-evaluation process:

- 1) Approve the self-evaluation summary report as-is through the consent agenda, agreeing to a performance rating of 71% in meeting best practices criteria, with further discussions to be held in a future retreat setting.
- 2) Remove this item from the consent agenda and discuss the areas of concern prior to approving a performance rating. Results of this discussion could lead to the same approval of the 71% rating as-is or could lead to changes in the collective performance rating, where areas of disagreement are modified to have agreed upon board approval in meeting the criteria. These options are specifically defined as Alternatives 2a, 2b, 2c, or 2d, each with further discussions to be held in a future retreat setting.
 - a. Criteria where just one board member disagreed are moved to common agreement, specifically #s: 4, 8, 11, and 12; resulting in a rating of 76%.
 - b. Criteria where either one or two board members disagreed are both moved to common agreement, specifically #s: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15; resulting in a rating of 89%.
 - c. Each criterion where disagreement occurred is considered individually, resulting in a rating that would be defined upon board approval.
 - d. Continue with the rating of 71% with discussion commentary defined for the subsequently developed key performance measure narratives.

RECOMMENDATION

The Department recommends the Board proceed with the Alternative 1 and approve the summary evaluation report as the conclusion of the 2025 self-evaluation process. The Department further recommends the Board engage in a discussion on the governance criteria, planning for the governance topics, and procedures to consider in drafting the Board Policy Manual Addenda G 3.12.2, within a future retreat setting.

NEXT STEPS

Results of the collective self-evaluation will be included in the Department's *2025 Annual Performance Progress Report* submitted to the Department of Administrative Services and Legislative Fiscal Office.

ATTACHMENT

1) 2025 Summary of Best Practices Performance Evaluation (*Oregon Board of Forestry*)

**Oregon Board of Forestry
Governance Performance Measure
2025 Summary of Best Practices Performance Evaluations**

Performance Measure: Percent of total best practices met by the Board.

Target: 100%


Period: Annual



ODF Key Performance Measure: #2

Board Adopted: September 6, 2006

Summary of Individual Board Member Evaluations – May 7, 2025

Key: Within Each Criteria:




#’s
 = Board member tally count
= range of ratings

Oregon Board of Forestry Best Practices Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Executive Director’s performance expectations are current. <i>The Board understands this to mean that the State Forester’s Position Description is current.</i> <u>Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, we are in rapidly shifting times and conditions in the state of Oregon. The scale and intensity of disturbances that impact the lands that ODF and Board oversee has not seen the change we see today. The incoming State Forester will benefit from performance expectations that take into consideration realistic, dynamic and fluid set of expectations, that cannot always be controlled. • We are about to re-evaluate this document. • I'm going to put "agree," as I don't expect anything has changed since it was last set, but I can't say I've reviewed the position description lately. Would have been helpful if it were linked here. 	0	4 	2	0
2. Executive Director’s performance has been evaluated in the last year. <i>The Board understands this to mean that the State Forester’s Position Description is current, and that the annual performance appraisal has been completed.</i> <u>Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I personally am very dismayed that the Board's evaluation was seemingly ignored for the past State Forester and indeed dismissed in a chaotic process that resulted in his resignation. We need to do better. • The State Forester resigned just as the annual performance review was about to be initiated. So technically the answer is no. But the Board was not negligent. • We were never given the opportunity to evaluate the State Forester's performance before he resigned. • Pretty sure that's not been done. • I do not believe that we completed a performance evaluation in 2024 due to intervention by the Governor's office. 	0	2 	3	1




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Oregon Board of Forestry Best Practices Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<p>3. The agency's mission and high-level goals are current and applicable. <i>The Board understands this to mean that the Board's <u>Vision for Oregon's Forests</u> and Oregon Forest Practices Act/Rules are current.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though we were in development of a Vision during 2024, that espouses a balanced approach to resources, landscapes, and communities, I cannot help but remember the HCP outcome, where we voted to move forward (out of much fear) with an HCP that results in great harm to communities, in the name of benefitting wildlife. If our planned vision is implemented, it will not matter that our strategic plans are current. We will continue to create win-lose outcomes. • A lot of work was done in this arena, and more to do. • The Vision document is complete. Dissemination throughout the agency is still ongoing though. • Yeah, we just went through this process. • If this means that the Vision document was finalized, then yes, I agree. 	2 ←→	4 ←→	0	0
<p>4. The Board reviews the <u>Annual Performance Progress Report</u>. <i>The Board understands this to mean that the Board reviews the report annually as a meeting agenda item.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, though we don't take the time to address the issues the report presents. • I seem to recall doing this, though I'm not entirely sure how formal it was. • I do not recall doing this in 2024. 	1 ←→	4 ←→	1 ←→	0
<p>5. The Board is appropriately involved in review of agency's key communications. <i>The Board understands this to mean agency and Board communications at a policy level, versus a day-to-day operating level.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would say the Board is not involved at all in this process. • We are ONLY informed of the highest-level information. Communication between the Agency and the Board could be improved substantially. 	0	4 ←→	2 ←→	0



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Oregon Board of Forestry Best Practices Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<p>6. The Board is appropriately involved in policy-making activities. <i>The Board understands this to mean those policy activities that particularly have a statewide perspective, including holding Board meetings at different geographic locations around the state.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am choosing "disagree" because sadly our public meeting rules are designed to limit our policy-making activities, in the name of transparency. Many of the Natural resources are complicated, multi-layered issues that cannot be fully unraveled or resolved by small subcommittees, a board limited by public meeting rules, and the sideboards of transparency. This results in simple transactional decisions. The PFA was removed from the confines of meeting rules and allowed to fully breathe and resulted in transformational outcome that has longevity and meets the multiple desires of multiple interests. Bravo! • I think we generally are, though I sometimes wonder where the line is between the State Forester and the Board in terms of policy-making activities. We're a policy board and should be involved in policy making. • Only to a certain degree. PFA associated policies are given to us, we have no role in crafting policy and we certainly are not using the best current science to craft policies. 	0	4 	2	0
<p>7. The agency's policy option packages are aligned with their mission and goals. <i>The Board understands this to mean the packages included in the biennial budget process as part of the Agency Request Budget.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was very little engagement with the board this year regarding POP's • I really feel like we're not allowed to participate in this process at all. The agency brings us a baked cake and then ships it to the governor. • Only to the degree that fire control and prescribed fire and fuel reduction are important, but funding for state forests and improvements in FPA rules have not seemed to be a priority. 	0	3 	3	0
<p>8. The Board reviews all proposed budgets. <i>The Board understands this to mean the Department of Forestry's biennial budget at the Agency Request Budget level.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree, but looming out there is the increasingly uncontrollable cost of wildfire and other catastrophic events. • We were given a budget to review but no time or space for input. • If we review it, it seems after the fact. 	0	5 	1	0




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Oregon Board of Forestry Best Practices Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<p>9. The Board periodically reviews key financial information and audit findings. <i>The Board understands this to mean significant financial issues and as audits are released.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great job on the monthly financial updates. • Yes, I think we do, but I think we should spend more time on this. 	2 	4	0	0
<p>10. The Board is appropriately accounting for resources. <i>The Board understands this to mean critical issues relating to human, financial, material and facilities resources by providing oversight in these areas. This means that the Board receives briefings on such issues as succession management, vacancies, the budget, and financial effects of the fire program.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am choosing Disagree because of the perceived "firewall" between board oversight and State Forester responsibility for Ops. Briefings are happening, but they are often directed to the Chair, due to expediency and meeting rules. This limits any significant dialogue that might be helpful to the State Forester in any timely way. This is a shame because there is a wealth of diverse experience within the leadership of the Board that can be helpful. • No, I'd say that the agency largely leaves the Board out of this business. • The question asks if we account for resources. We are made aware of resource constraints, but we do not have direct influence in accounting for resource use. Staffing changes are usually made without Board input and fire costs are beyond any Board influence. We are made aware of the issues mentioned in this question, but we have little to no input. 	0	3 	3	0
<p>11. The agency adheres to accounting rules and other relevant financial controls. <i>The Board understands this to mean the receipt of the annual statewide audit report from Secretary of State which highlights any variances in accounting rules or significant control weaknesses.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't remember seeing this report in the last few years. • I have no reason to believe they're skirting the accounting rules. 	1 	4	1	0

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Oregon Board of Forestry Best Practices Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<p>12. Board members act in accordance with their roles as public representatives. <i>The Board understands this to mean that they follow public meeting rules, the standard of conduct for Board members, and the public input process. Members received training and information from the Governor's Office upon appointment.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I choose Disagree, because Counsel is asked to narrowly interpret public meeting rules, at the most minimal risk level. Our outsized and often devastating natural resource issues deserve and need more in-depth time and true collaborative engagement, that Oregon meeting rules cannot provide. Small board subcommittees and dwindling ODF staff are not sufficient to explore the diverse, creative solutions needed for today's and future solutions. We need engagement that goes beyond the 7 board members and ODF staff. Procedural and Substantive approaches are necessary in governance, but do we have a bias for "procedure"(of meeting rules) to the severe detriment to "substance" (significant dialogue and robust decision building). We are on a path to mediocrity. • Sometimes we don't get it right. • I think the Board members generally do a good job. 	0	5 	1	0
<p>13. The Board coordinates with others where responsibilities and interests overlap. <i>The Board understands this to mean other public agencies and boards with statutory authority connections or overlaps, e.g. the Forest Trust Land Counties, the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission/Department of Environmental Quality; the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission/Department of Fish and Wildlife; the State Land Board; local fire districts; the United States Forest Service; the Bureau of Land Management.</i></p> <p><u>Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I choose agree. However, even though we do connect with other entities, it is in an "as needed" basis. We could be more proactive. As natural resources events (wildfire, floods, wind events) have more cross-over in multiple ownerships, we need to be more forward thinking. • We engage with FTLAC really well! But there is significant room for improvement in the board's engagement with other relevant agencies. • I'm still learning about this. It would be helpful to understand the overlap with other agencies, particularly DEQ and ODFW. • This rarely happens except as ad hoc conversations with members of other Boards and Commissions. 	0	4 	2	0

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Oregon Board of Forestry Best Practices Criteria	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. The Board members identify and attend appropriate training sessions. <i>The Board understands this to mean the workshops, symposia, and field tours that accompany some Board meetings, and that the Board receives adequate technical information.</i> <u>Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although I agree, that the on-line training sessions provide an efficient way to accomplish required training. I believe our Board could benefit from a facilitator with skills to draw out the range of leadership skills of the members. Strong leadership, can come with strong feelings on topics. I encourage professional facilitation at meetings where controversial decisions are made. • I'm not sure what training sessions these would be. • Many of these do not have direct policy relevance. 	0	4 	2	0
15. The Board reviews its management practices to ensure best practices are utilized. <i>The Board understands this to mean carrying out this self-evaluation on an annual basis, conducting the annual Board work plan status check, and addressing emerging issues.</i> <u>Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't recall the Board doing this. • We have not had an updated work plan for several years. 	0	4 	2	0
<i>Listed below is an additional best practice for the Board of Forestry; not included in calculating the percentage adherence to best practices.</i>				
16. The Board values public input and transparency in conducting its work through outreach to and engagement of stakeholders and by using its work plan communication tools. The Board also values input and communications with its standing advisory committees, special ad hoc committees and panels and external committees with board interests. <u>Comments:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making the decision to involve more fully the counties was the right thing to do. • Yes, we value input, but not by way of a work plan. 	1 	5	0	0
Total Number (Criteria 1-15)	6	58	25	1
Percentage of Total in Each Evaluation Category (Criteria 1-15)	6.67%	64.44%	27.78%	1.11%
Percentage of Total in "Agree" and "Disagree" (Criteria 1-15)	71%		29%	

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Summary Questions for Consideration:

1. How is the Board doing?

- It has been a rough year, the decision on the HCP and my personal perspective of it, made it difficult to see that the board and ODF had truly done our best work. I think we mostly were weary of the controversy and wanted it to end. We had several meetings with difficult interpersonal dynamics. We lost, in an abrupt and surprising manner, the State Forester. Declining budgets are looming and wildfire costs are booming. The addition of Heath Curtiss is a boost, but the loss of Bob VanDyk was a shame. They both bring skills in respectful collaboration, that is rare in today's world. 2025 needs to be a year of recovery.
- 2024 was a rough year with challenging Board dynamics that were a distraction. And a rough year for the Department and the State Forester with unfair and misleading media stories that were distracting. The Board's work on its Policy Manual was a solid accomplishment.
- The board members are a great group that work quite well together. The Board as a whole could be more engaged on a number of issues.
- I'd say the Board is doing fairly well. I think the Board could play a more meaningful role in agency oversight, but there's obvious tension there.
- We need to be empowered by the Governor to fulfill our role, and we need strong visionary Board leadership.

2. What factors are affecting the Board's results?

- Oregon resources issues are stuck in an old model of enviros vs. industry. Other States have moved through this model.
- Much of 2024 was focused on the Vision for Oregon's Forests and the BPM. Good foundation work but leaving less time for basic policy work.
- I'm not sure what this is asking.
- Interference in Board responsibilities from the Governor's office is adversely affecting our focus on policy issues. We also need a strong Board leader who will ensure that scientific information is foundational to policy formation.

3. What needs to be done to improve future performance?

- We need basic training and skills in becoming a team that can build transformational actions/decisions.
- Effective and involved Board members focused on policy and the success of the State Forester and the Department.
- I'd say it would be helpful if the State Forester could engage the Board more regularly on management issues and the business of running the agency.
- Ensure that the Natural Resources Policy Office allows us to do our job without interference. We need to recruit and hire a strong leader for ODF and we need a strong and visionary Board Chair.