



KATE BROWN
Governor

February 11, 2020

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and
Natural Resources

Representative Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Water

Senator Betsy Johnson
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward
Representative Dan Rayfield
Chairs, Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Legislators,

As you know, this fall, I asked my natural resource agencies to gather feedback on the first draft of Oregon's 100-Year Water Vision, and to design a process for effectively engaging Oregonians. Water is one of the most complex natural resource issues in the state, and requires this level of engagement.

Staff are finalizing their evaluation of the responses received this fall, and will present the full summary when complete. It is very clear from early feedback that Oregonians have a strong interest in moving forward on strategic water planning and investments. I am asking for your support to continue this work by supporting the funding of the executive branch's three Water Vision Implementation budget requests.

Based on initial feedback from this fall's conversations, Phase II will focus on the following objectives:

Community Capacity: Recommend approaches to help communities engage individuals equitably, and expand capabilities to strategically plan for and implement actions to pursue their water futures. *(OWEB Vision Implementation budget request)*

Water Investment Governance: Recommend a framework for local, regional, and statewide governance that will lead to state-supported, regionally appropriate approaches to prioritize water investments with a focus on ensuring all individuals are represented. *(OWEB Vision Implementation budget request)*

Water Funding: Recommend approaches to increase funding coordination, identify early investment needs and funding gaps, and new funding sources that support community water planning, implementation, innovation, and evaluation. *(OWEB Vision Implementation budget request)*

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- **Engaging Oregonians:** Recommend approaches to help Oregonians better understand the vital importance of water, the water challenges we face, and the need for all of us to work together and to support strategic water investments. (*engagement conversations will provide input into WRD Business Case budget request*)
- **Data and Information Systems:** Recommend data needs, tools, and information delivery systems that will help local communities and funders better understand current water and infrastructure conditions, and future water trends, to inform strategic decision-making at all levels. (*supported in part by DEQ Decision Support Tool budget request*)

The process is not intended to focus on policy or statutory changes, except those recommended as a part of the advisory council process to advance the objectives outlined above.

Should the legislature approve funding, I will be formally announcing a Water Future Advisory Council following the 2020 Legislative Session. We will advance work on these objectives through the council, along with support from other committees and external partnerships, aligning this work with both the 100-Year Vision and Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy. I have asked Senator Roblan and Bruce Taylor to co-convene the advisory council. More detail will follow with the formal announcement, including conveners for advisory council committees, and other council members. Through this process, we intend to provide direct ways for tribes, the public, and stakeholder organization representing diverse interests to engage with statewide leaders in the process. We will also work with the legislature to identify members to serve in an ex-officio capacity to carry this process forward in a meaningful way while providing coordination between both branches of state government.

While the process will highlight broad-scale investment opportunities for the 2021 Legislative Session, the next phase is not intended to prioritize individual community project investments. Rather, the process will help to establish a state and regional framework for how investments should be strategically coordinated and prioritized.

As referenced in the objectives above, we have budget requests for the 2020 Legislative Session in three areas: Water Vision Coordination & Implementation, Data Decision Support Tools, and a Business Case. Without legislative approval of funding for these three requests in the 2020 short session, we will not be advancing the work outlined above.

I appreciate the Legislature's willingness to take on this important issue through the formation of the House Water Committee. We support the House Water committee's work to advance important discussions around harmful algal blooms, septic system replacements and increasing water reporting. I look forward to seeing these discussions advanced through the legislative process. All of this work will help to improve the health of our economy, our communities, and our environment.

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If you have questions during the Legislative Session, please reach out to Jason Miner in my office (Jason.Miner@oregon.gov), or Meta Loftsgaarden, Executive Director of the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, who has been leading the Phase I Water Vision work, (Meta.Loftsgaarden@oregon.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Brown" followed by a horizontal line.

Governor Kate Brown

KB:jm,kl