



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor



OREGON
WATERSHED
ENHANCEMENT BOARD

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Overview

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is a state agency that administers grants for watershed restoration, fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, farm and ranchland protection, and natural and working lands.

In 2023, the state of Oregon and Washington and the Yakama, Nez Perce, Umatilla, and Warm Springs Tribes (the “Six Sovereigns”) developed the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative as a science-based strategy to restore salmon to healthy and abundant levels, support local and regional economic and climate resilience, restoration ecosystem function and honor longstanding and unmet commitments to Tribal Nations. In September 2024, Governor Kotek signed EO-24-28, requiring the named state agencies, which included OWEB, to take actions necessary to support Oregon’s commitments to the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative and the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement. This report provides OWEB’s updates under EO-24-28.

1. Identify and describe all program commitments that identify the Agency, and any program commitments that are within the Agency’s direct or indirect areas of expertise.

OWEB is not specifically identified in any Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative (CBRI) program commitments. However, OWEB administers a variety of grant programs that can provide direct and indirect support to the program commitments. OWEB’s grant programs fund activities, leading to resilient ecosystems, fish and wildlife populations, working landscapes, and communities.

OWEB’s grantmaking strategically integrates priorities identified by other state and federal agencies, including federal recovery plans, state conservation or tribal plans, and water quality plans. Grant types include restoration, land and water acquisition, technical design, technical planning, monitoring, and engagement. OWEB’s newest grant program offers Tribal Project Development grants.

OWEB grant programs can support many of the program commitments by helping partners remove barriers to fish passage, restore habitat and stream flows, and enhance resiliency to climate change. Specific program commitments identified in the MOU between the federal government and the Six Sovereigns that OWEB programs already support or can support in the future include:

- Mid-Columbia Restoration Plan (Objective 1(a))
- Cold Water Refuge Projects (Objective 1(a))
- Native Fish and Shellfish (Objective 1(a) and 2)
- Improved Ecosystem Function Commitments (Objective 1(a))
- Ocean and Estuary Actions (Objective 1(a))
- Increased Funding in Support of Basin-Wide Restoration (Objective 1(a))

2. Describe the agency's existing statutory and administrative authority and programs to implement program commitments identified in subsection i;

OWEB administers Lottery Fund, Federal Fund, General Fund and Other Fund through its various grant programs. Grant programs support voluntary conservation activities across the state. Partners include hundreds of local stewardship organizations including watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts and other non-governmental organizations; landowners; tribal governments; cities and counties; and schools and universities. OWEB also works closely with state and federal agencies to support integrated, enterprise-level natural resource priorities. Projects support watershed restoration and resilience, water quality improvements, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, farm and ranchland protection, natural climate solutions, and drinking water source protection.

OWEB's statutory authorities include broad, grantmaking authority focused on watershed health, conservation, protection, and recovery of fish and wildlife species and their habitats. Some of OWEB's authorities relate specifically to Constitutionally-directed lottery dollars for grants for watershed restoration, but as noted above, the agency now administers a variety of funding sources and has the authorities needed to operate these funding sources and programs.

Below are just some of OWEB's grant programs. All of the grant programs listed below directly support the CBRI Program Commitments described in subsection i. Additionally, a variety of other OWEB programs provide direct or indirect benefits to native fish and contribute to CBRI objectives. Evaluation criteria for all grants are set in rule and are referenced below.

Grant Programs (ORS 541.947, 541.956, and ORS 541.932 and 541.960 for Land and Water Acquisition)

- Water acquisition grants (OAR 695-046): Eligible projects involve the purchase of an interest in water from a willing seller for the purpose of increasing instream flow for habitat and species conservation benefits and improving water quality. These projects are funded with Oregon Lottery, federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, and General Funds.
- Land acquisition grants (OAR 695-045): Eligible projects involve the purchase of interests in land from willing sellers for the purpose of maintaining or restoring watersheds and habitat for native fish or wildlife. These projects are funded with Oregon Lottery Funds.
- Open Solicitation grant program is a responsive grant program based on local, state, federal, tribal, and regional planning processes. Grants are typically offered twice a year through a competitive process. These projects are funded with Oregon Lottery, Salmon License Plate and Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funds.
 - *Technical Assistance grants (695-030)*: support technical assistance projects necessary for restoration or acquisition projects and include technical design, engineering, resource assessment and planning.
 - *Restoration grants (695-010)*: support watershed projects that restore watershed functions.

- *Monitoring grants (695-025)*: support monitoring projects that work to address current watershed conditions, identify trends, determine project effectiveness, and information future restoration and acquisition actions.
- *Engagement grants (695-015)*: support outreach efforts necessary for carrying out eligible restoration and acquisition projects.
- Focused Investment Partnership Program (695-047) supports high-performing partnerships in pursuing conservation initiatives guided by existing strategic action plans. The OWEB Board has approved 6 board adopted priorities for this program. The work under the CBRI falls under the Aquatic Habitat for Native Species priority and under the Coastal Estuary priority.
- Tribal Project Development grants (695-030). These funds will be available to support Oregon nine federally recognized Tribes and the Nez Perce to participate in salmon recovery efforts in Oregon. These are non-competitive grants with \$100,000 allocated to each Tribe. These projects are funded with Oregon Lottery, and Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funds.
- Partnership Technical Assistance grants (695-030): support existing partnerships to generate a new or enhance an existing strategic action plan, elevate the partnership's current level of performance and support partnership capacity.
- Programmatic Effectiveness Monitoring grant (695-030): evaluates the outcomes of OWEB investments at a broader watershed scale versus individual project monitoring efforts.

3. Describe any gaps in statutory or administrative (rule) authority that would be necessary to accelerate full and effective program implementation;

None have been identified.

4. Identify opportunities within existing programs and authorities to accelerate effective program implementation; and

Three OWEB programs, Focused Investment Partnerships, Open Solicitation, and Water Acquisitions, present opportunities to local partners or coalitions of local partners to plan and implement projects at multiple scales that support the program commitments in the MOU.

OWEB's Focused Investment Partnership Program (FIP) supports high-performing partnerships in pursuing conservation initiatives guided by existing strategic action plans. The program provides long-term funding for six board-adopted ecological priorities, two of which have significant connections to the CBRI. The Aquatic Habitat for Native Species priority supports the program commitments identified in the MOU between the federal government and the six sovereigns:

- Mid-Columbia Restoration Plan (Objective 1(a))
- Cold Water Refuge Projects (Objective 1(a))
- Native Fish and Shellfish (Objective 1(a) and 2)
- Improved Ecosystem Function Commitments (Objective 1(a))
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The Coastal Estuaries priority supports Ocean and Estuary Actions under Objective 1(a).

FIP Program Implementation funding supports partnerships with up to \$12 million over 3 biennia. Partnerships applying for FIP Implementation funding must have a strategic action plan that defines the geographic extent, timeframe, and range of strategies and actions that will lead to the long-term goals of a partnership. Once funded implementation funding supports Partnership Capacity, Engagement, Monitoring, Technical Assistance, Restoration, and Land and Water Acquisition. An Aquatic Habitat for Native or a Coastal Estuaries FIP focused on CBRI program objectives could accelerate program implementation. OWEB's next solicitation for Implementation FIPs launched in February 2026 and applications are due in July 2026.

Within OWEB's currently funded FIPs the John Day Basin Partnership is working on the John Day Basin Native Fish Habitat Initiative. This initiative brings together partners throughout the basin with a common interest in restoring watersheds to enhance native fish populations, while at the same time maintaining healthy working landscapes and thriving local communities. The work of the partnership directly supports the CBRI program objectives.

OWEB's Open Solicitation grant program is a responsive grant program based on local, state, federal, tribal, and regional planning processes. Grants are typically offered twice a year through a competitive process and reviewed by regional review teams located around the state. Grant applications submitted in support of CBRI program objectives to this program would likely be evaluated favorably.

OWEB's Partnership Technical Assistance grant program is a responsive grant program that supports existing partnerships to generate a new or enhance an existing strategic action plan, elevate the partnership's current level of performance and support partnership capacity. Grants were awarded by the OWEB Board in April 2026, with one grant, supporting work in the John Day Basin that aligns with the CBRI program objectives.

OWEB's Water Acquisition grant program is a responsive grant program that supports streamflow restoration. Applicants can develop time-limited projects such as instream leases or temporary transfers, as well as permanent instream transfers. In 2022, OWEB received a \$10 million legislative allocation to provide additional long-term funding for this program. Due to the complex nature of the transactions in this program, and the limited number of partners in the state with expertise in water transactions, applications to this program during its lifetime have been limited. The legislative investment in this program offers an opportunity to grow grant investments in streamflow restoration over the long term.

OWEB's Programmatic Effectiveness Monitoring grant program is a targeted program that supports evaluating the outcomes of OWEB investments at a broader watershed scale. Recently the OWEB Board invested in the Long-term Fish and Habitat Monitoring within the Middle Fork Intensively Monitored Watershed. This effectiveness monitoring project aligns with the CBRI program objectives.

5. Identify any resources the Agency currently has to implement the *CBRI* and *RBCA* and all resources and funding the Agency does not currently have but would need to accelerate effective *CBRI* and *RBCA* implementation.

OWEB's resources include staff as well as granting resources. The agency has 47 budgeted positions in its 25-27 legislatively adopted budget, 12 of which are fully or partially federally funded. All of these positions exist to support OWEB's grantmaking and range from project-management to fiscal to reporting staff to administrative.

OWEB generally uses Lottery and Federal Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funds (PCSRF) to fund Open Solicitation and Focused Investment Partnership grant programs. OWEB is anticipating \$107.8 million of Lottery Funds available for grants in the 2025-2027 biennium. OWEB applies annually to the PCSRF program. The PCSRF program is anticipating less funding available for it FFY26 and FFY27 funding opportunities, which may impact the number of projects OWEB can fund.

HOW OWEB FUNDING INVESTMENTS HELP THE ECONOMY

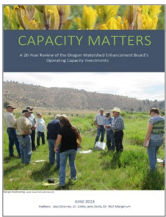
From 2004 to 2023, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) has supported statewide and regional studies, to better understand the economic benefits of OWEB grant investments. OWEB's grant investments include funding for restoration projects, project development and design, and monitoring. Some studies were paid for directly by OWEB, while others were funded by partners working on OWEB-supported projects.

In addition to the environmental benefits of OWEB's grantmaking, these funds also benefit local communities across Oregon, helping generate jobs, retain expertise, and support businesses.

STATEWIDE REPORTS

Capacity Matters: 20-Year Review of the OWEB's Operating Capacity Investments

2023, Oregon State University and University of Oregon



Assessment of OWEB Investment in Soil and Water Conservation District and Watershed Council Operational Capacity: This report looks at capacity grants awarded to soil and water conservation districts (districts) and watershed councils (councils) and benefits to communities from these grants.

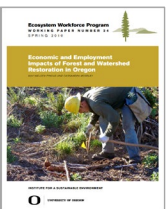
FINDINGS:

- OWEB awarded over **\$80 million** in Operating Capacity grants (2011–2021).
- Councils and districts **brought in an additional \$142 million from OWEB** competitive grants.
- Councils and districts **leveraged additional funding** from public, private, and philanthropic organizations, which **helped secure match** for federal dollars.
- Spending by these groups and their employees **boosted local economies**.



The Economic & Employment Impacts of Forest & Watershed Restoration in Oregon

2010, University of Oregon Ecosystem Workforce Program



Statewide Restoration and Forest work in Oregon: Summarizes the economic benefits of restoration and forestry contracting, focusing on jobs created and economic activity in local communities.

FINDINGS:

- Every **\$1 million** in public investment in forest and watershed restoration supports **about 15.7 to 23.8 jobs**.
- Each public dollar invested generates **1.4 to 2.4 times** more economic activity as it moves through Oregon's economy.
- This analysis of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds suggests that about **230 jobs are created per year** from Oregon plan investments.



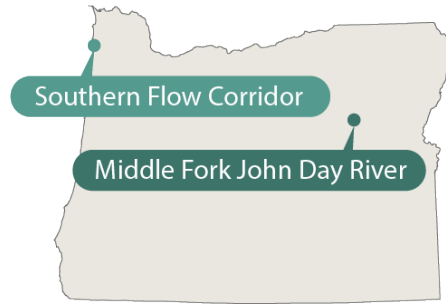
RESOURCES

University of Oregon Ecosystem Workforce Program

This organization assessed socioeconomic outcomes from restoration actions and produced several papers.

A Guide for Developing Socio-economic Measures Institute for Policy Research and Innovation, 2009
Helped watershed councils develop ways to track the social and economic impacts of their conservation work.

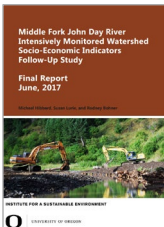
OWEB Economic Impacts website



GEOGRAPHICALLY FOCUSED REPORTS

Middle Fork John Day River Socio-economic Indicators Follow-up Study Report

2017, Sue Lurie, Mike Hibbard and Rodney Bohner



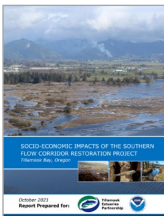
Upper John Day Basin, Grant County: Summarizes socioeconomic effects of restoration and monitoring in the Middle Fork Intensively Monitored Watershed (IMW) over 10 years. Measures were developed with a local advisory group in 2009 and then calculated in 2016 to measure the impacts of IMW to the local community.

FINDINGS:

- **Most of the spending stayed local**, boosting jobs and economic output in Grant County.
- From 2007–2017, OWEB invested **\$2.6 million** toward **21 grants** that brought in an additional **\$7.7 million** in match funding
- These grants led to **33 restoration contracts**—mostly to private firms in Grant County. An estimated **\$6.8 million** of money spent on these contracts directly benefited Grant County’s economy.

Socio-economic Impacts Report

2021, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Tillamook Estuary Partnership



Tillamook Bay, Tillamook County: Reviews the contribution of the Southern Flow Corridor (SFC) restoration to the local economy. The SFC site is a 521-acre tidal wetland habitat restoration and flood reduction project designed to create salmon habitat and decrease seasonal flooding impacts in the City of Tillamook. A variety of state and federal agencies, including OWEB, non-governmental organizations, and private funding sources, contributed over \$10 million to complete this multi-year project.

FINDINGS:

- **Water Quality:** The site likely traps sediment, reducing buildup in Tillamook Bay and may save **\$1,500–\$8,000 per year** in dredging costs.
- **Flood Reduction:** Less flooding on Highway 101 could save about **\$7,200 per flood event** in avoided travel delays.
- **Property Value:** Nearby home values rose by **10%** after the project, averaging a **\$19,000 increase per home** within ¾ mile.
- **Economic Impact:** The project supported **108 jobs** and generated **\$14.6 million** in economic activity (2013–2016).
- **Carbon Storage:** The site may store up to **27,000 tons of carbon**, valued at **\$530,000–\$736,000**. Ongoing monitoring is needed to track potential greenhouse gas emissions as the wetland matures.