

Interagency Survey Results April 2023

Interagency Feedback on the 2017 IWRS

An interagency survey was distributed to several state agencies in April, 2023. The primary agencies receiving the survey were those on the IWRS Project Team; the Department of Land Conservation & Development, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the Oregon Water Resources Department. **A total of 142 people responded to the survey.**

The purpose of the survey was to gather agency perspective and feedback to incorporate in the next IWRS, to compliment the public engagement process occurring in May and June of 2023. The third edition of the IWRS is anticipated to be released in early 2024.

Familiarity with the IWRS

Questions 1 & 2

Question 1 asked **how familiar agency staff were with the IWRS.**

- Over 60% of respondents had some familiarity with the IWRS, having heard of it or read some of it
- About 23% had no familiarity with the IWRS
- About 15% considered themselves very familiar, having read it and having familiarity with its contents

Question 2 asked about **how often the respondents referenced the IWRS.**

- About 56% of respondents said they never reference the IWRS in their work
- About 13% said they reference it every couple of years
- Almost 22% reference it at least every year
- 8% reference it monthly or more often

Recommendation: A potential solution for increasing agency awareness of and familiarity with the IWRS was offered by respondents during some questions later in the survey. Providing staff with an **introduction to the IWRS through training or presentations** may improve familiarity with its contents, along with **more frequent reports on agency progress** towards implementation of the IWRS.

Function of the IWRS

Questions 3 & 4

Question 3 asked respondents about the **most common reasons for referencing the IWRS**. Out of 84 responses, 50 people (60%) selected “**Agency roles or responsibilities related to water.**” Five choices received a range of 25 to 32 votes (30-38%) for the following reasons:

- Information about water issues
- Potential solutions to water issues
- Information about agency programs
- Work planning

Less than 10 of the respondents said they used the IWRS for agency biennial budget development or informing their regular work tasks.

The option for entering ‘Other’ was also given. A total of 18 respondents selected ‘Other’ with most responses stating they do not reference the IWRS or entering ‘N/A’. However, a few provided additional detail for the “**Other**” reasons for referencing the IWRS, including:

- Communication guidance about issues, solutions, and agency’s role
- Justifies or elevates a project as a priority by being identified in the IWRS
- To improve collaboration
- Project Charters
- Place-based Planning
- To see what has been said but not done

Recommendation: In addition to presenting agency roles and responsibilities related to water within the IWRS, there could be additional **communication about the other functions of the document**. This might be **added in the introduction**, and consistently messaged with IWRS communications.

Question 4 asked **how the IWRS informs their work**. Common themes across the 97 responses included:

- It provides a high-level, broad picture of water issues
- Describes agency roles
- Lists State goals and objectives
- Provides direction for prioritization
- Provides some funding resources
- Supports Place-Based Planning
- Identifies knowledge gaps
- Identifies resources needed
- Supports public awareness of water issues

Recommendation: It will be important to continue to support the common reasons for referencing the IWRS, but there could be **additional emphasis given to the role of providing communication guidance across agencies regarding water issues/solution/agency roles**. Providing staff training and presentations on the IWRS (mentioned above) may also increase the awareness around the content of the IWRS and encourage its use for public awareness of water issues.

Modifications to the IWRS

Questions 5 & 11

Question 5 asked an open-ended question about **how the IWRS could be more useful to the individual, their colleagues, and/or agency leadership**. Themes from this included:

- Enhance/Increase communication about IWRS (website and social media)
- Employee training on the IWRS (introduction and ongoing)
- Web-based mapping (to show projects, priorities, regional issues)
- Make actions measurable
- Provide timelines for actions, short-term vs long-term
- More concise
- Clearly identify necessary funding for staff and programs
- Identify agency program connections to IWRS recommended actions

Recommendation: The majority of survey respondents look to the IWRS for agency roles and responsibilities related to water (survey question 3), however answers to question 5 indicate a need to also **link agency programs to IWRS recommended actions**. Increased resources will be needed to develop website features and mapping. A call to make the document more concise in Question 5 might be considered in combination with comments to Question 11 that call for improved document accessibility to different learning levels.

Question 11 asked respondents to share thoughts about **revisions they would like to see to the IWRS**. This was the last question asked in the survey and had fewer responses than preceding questions, only receiving 55 responses out of the 142 total respondents.

Common themes across these responses echoed some from Question 5 and included:

- Increase agency coordination
- Address data management, quality/quantity, and IT challenges
- Engage with youth, academia, and local leaders
- Increase public awareness of IWRS and improve accessibility to different learning levels
- Convey key takeaways (without reading whole document)

Responses also included mention of specific issues they would like to see addressed/expanded in the IWRS:

- Climate Change, including trends and adaptation strategies
- Equity
- Invasive species
- Rainwater harvesting

- Evapotranspiration data
- Water rights
- NPDES discharges

Recommendation: Responses that asked for increased public engagement and awareness about the IWRS, accessibility to different learning levels, and a summary of key takeaways might all be addressed in the **creation/addition of an Executive Summary or other type of Summary material** that presents the key points of the IWRS. The IWRS Interagency team might also look for ways to make actions measurable, associated with a general timeline, and link them to agency's programs, and identify funding needs (and resources).

Preferred Format

Question 6

Question 6 asked agency staff about their preferences for paper or digital versions of the IWRS. The overwhelming majority of **respondents prefer a digital-only version (74%) of the IWRS**. Less than 2% prefer paper only and 24% prefer having access to both paper and digital.

Recommendation: Focus on digital accessibility and functionality for the IWRS update. Retain the option for printing paper versions, but the majority of people may be accessing online. Verify with public input that digital access is preferred. Consider resources needed to **enhance the online/digital accessibility of the 3rd edition of the IWRS**.

Critical Water Issues and State Focus

Questions 7 & 8

Question 7 asked **“What are the most critical water issues that you think Oregon will be facing over the next 10 years?”** The most common responses included:

- Drought
- Water scarcity
- Climate Change
- Water quality, including temperature
- Wildfire
- Planning
- Policy/ Rules
- Water rights
- Instream flows

Recommendation: Look for consistency between these issues and those raised by the public during the public meetings and survey. Consider how the 2017 IWRS addressed these issues and whether descriptions and solutions need to be modified, expanded upon, etc.

Question 8 asked where the respondents thought the state should focus its resources over the next 5-10 years. Common themes from the responses included:

- Conservation

- Data collection and modernization
- Water rights & overallocation
- Storage
- Regulation/Enforcement/Compliance
- Climate change resiliency/planning
- Instream water rights
- Education and outreach
- Manage for both water quantity and quality

Recommendation: Answers generally reflect responses to Questions #7. The concept of **conservation** was mentioned in many responses, however the water sector or approach to conservation varied. This will require some attention in the IWRS regarding the wide variety of ways to address conservation. Calls for continued data collection, addressing over allocation, regulation, enforcement, and compliance all **rely on consistent funding and support for agency capacity**, which must be conveyed in the IWRS.

Success & Partnerships

Questions 9 & 10

Question 9 asked “**Are there any agency success on water issues we might consider highlighting in the Strategy?**” The most common responses included:

- Place-based Planning
- Changes to groundwater rules
- Basin studies (Harney)
- Funding (WARRF, CWSRF, and OWEB)
- Cannabis water use enforcement
- Agency collaboration
- Instream water rights
- Fish screens and passage
- Ecosystem restoration
- Water quality permitting

There were also specific projects called out, which included:

- Water Quality Trading
- Fifteenmile Creek
- Port Orford source water protection using CWSRF

Recommendation: Responses generally referenced existing agency programs or funding programs. The next IWRS should clearly **link these programs with desired outcomes** to ensure continued support. Individual or “case study” projects should also be highlighted to provide successful examples of agency, Tribe, non-governmental organization, and local government **collaboration**.

Question 10 asked “**What are successful partnerships (e.g., with state or federal agencies, Tribes, non-profits, utilities, local governments) you have seen address water challenges?**” The most common responses included:

- Place-based Planning
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Watershed Councils
- Basin Studies
- Water Quality Trading

There were also specific entities and projects called out, which included:

- Dry Farming Institute
- Willow Creek Reservoir TMDL Implementation (Heppner, OR)
- Malheur Irrigation Efficiency Improvements (OWEB, NRCS, SWCD)
- Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan
- Beulah Reservoir and minimum pool for Bull trout
- Fifteenmile Creek
- Klamath dam removals
- Klamath Basin Monitoring Program
- North Umpqua Hydro Project federal mitigation fund
- Walla Walla Basin collaboration with Washington Department of Ecology

Recommendation: Look for opportunities to **highlight productive partnerships and project examples** in the next IWRS. **Additional research** will be needed regarding the specific projects mentioned above to identify all project partners, project funding, goals, and outcomes (if relevant) to determine the appropriate placement or reference in the IWRS.

Summary

In summary, the agency survey provides a helpful picture of strengths of the IWRS, ways it could better meet the needs of state agencies, and the overall need for agency training and awareness about how the IWRS can support their role in securing Oregon's water future. Additionally, survey responses provided a helpful list of successful agency programs and projects that might be highlighted in the next edition of the IWRS.

These results will be considered alongside the findings from the public outreach and engagement processes in May and June of 2023. The goal is that the 3rd Edition of the IWRS accurately reflects input from the full range of water interests in Oregon.