



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

## Water Resources Department

North Mall Office Building  
725 Summer Street NE, Suite A  
Salem, OR 97301-1266  
503-986-0900  
FAX 503-986-0904

To: Oregon Water Resources Commissioners  
From: Brenda Bateman, Senior Policy Coordinator  
Re: Notes from the Commission's May 29, 2008 Workshop  
Date: June 4, 2008

During last week's meeting, the Water Resources Commission began a discussion about the development of a long-term water resources strategy in Oregon. Below are some statutory references that set the context for this work, as well as some summary notes from the brainstorming session. Attached, please also find the power point slides used during the workshop. They contain some information about the type of work currently underway in our neighboring states.

### **Statutory Foundation**

In ORS 536.300 (1) the Oregon Legislative Assembly directs the Water Resources Commission to study "existing water resources of this state; means and methods of conserving and augmenting such water resources; existing and contemplated needs and uses of water for domestic, municipal, irrigation, power development, industrial, mining, recreation, wildlife, and fish life uses and for pollution abatement, all of which are declared to be beneficial uses..."

Further, in ORS 536.310, the Legislative Assembly directs the Water Resources Commission, as it formulates its water resources program, to take into consideration existing rights, and to incorporate the ideals of ORS 536.220 (b): "proper utilization and control of the water resources of the state can be achieved only through a coordinated, integrated state water resources policy, through plans and programs for the development of such water resources..."

Finally, ORS 536.241.(2), notes that "it is the policy of the State of Oregon to ensure a water supply sufficient to meet the needs of existing and future beneficial uses of water to adequately manage the state's water resources."

### **Initial Data-Gathering Efforts**

To facilitate these efforts, in 2007 the Oregon Legislature funded and the Department undertook a data gathering effort known as the Oregon Water Supply and Conservation Initiative. The purpose of this Initiative is to gather the informational foundation upon which a long-term strategy for meeting Oregon's water needs can be built.

The Department is requesting additional resources during 2009-2011, in addition to its base budget, to continue the data gathering effort. These requests include staff, equipment, and

research monies to continue water demand assessments, basin yield and peak flow analysis, surface water measurement, and ground water studies. The requests also include two dedicated staff to provide the facilitation, documentation, and outreach required to help develop a long-term water resources strategy.

## **May 2008 Discussion**

During the May 29, 2008 discussion, the Water Resources Commission began to discuss its vision of a long-term water resources strategy. Commissioners shared their thoughts on two primary topics: desired outcomes of a long-term strategy and what the process should include. The brainstorming results below list ideas in no particular ranking or order.

1. What are the desired outcomes of a long-term water resources strategy? It should:

- Be useful
- Have a structure that facilitates implementation
- Take time to implement properly, so we need to start now
- Include a process that lends itself to action, making things happen
- Be user friendly and beneficial
- Ensure adequate, long-term supply for all (recognized) beneficial uses
- Provide the water that is crucial for life, economics, community
- Address in-stream & ecological uses as well
- Allow for learning and adaptation
- Allow for constant re-adjustment (e.g., change in markets, climate, practices)
- Include in its next iteration the lessons learned from the previous round
- Be clear that each five-year look only represents “snapshot” in time
- Allow for an ongoing, evolving process
- Recognize that five-year reporting cycles tends to produce plans, not necessarily implementation
- Include a way to measure or evaluate water projects and studies
- Clearly explain whether and how the strategy relates to Oregon’s existing, and more prescriptive, Basin Plans
- Be based on science & local input.
- Use uniform protocols, in terms of data gathering
- Recognize that practices and needs will differ by Basin, while keeping a state-wide approach
- Utilize information, such as inventories, interactive maps, and databases, available to all.
- Result from an open process, available to water managers, water users, the public
- Note successful practices, such as conservation, supply, effective storage, effective re-use
- Provide incentives for stakeholders to participate in the planning process, such as local representation, planning grants, etc.
- Use lessons learned from Oregon’s land-use planning process. For instance, rely on local input, knowing that the process will not work in different parts of the state. Build in safety valves. Avoid getting overly complicated; use an iterative process.
- Get the best and latest technical information to communities so they can participate in the decision-making process. Note what has worked well and what has not.

- Include a preamble that explains why we are talking about this strategic plan right now. Such a section allows the state to accomplish several goals: host a conversation with Oregonians about water, remind participants of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oregon Water Code, provide a common vehicle for planning, and provide clarity, talking points, and a vision. Describe the value of the planning process in this section. This will be the document stakeholders and legislators refer to in future years.
- Use lessons learned from Oregon’s coastal model. For instance, avoid recommendations that are complicated, legalistic, and administrative. Focus more on recommendations that are visionary and challenging.
- Involve analysis at the staff level, evaluating the Basin Plan process, other state plans (tools, requests, outcomes, lessons learned).
- Commit to maintaining/sustaining beneficial uses.
- Be fair and creative.
- Offer a suite of potential solutions: outreach, education, regulatory, loans, other...
- “Take care of Oregon’s water.”
- Not prioritize public funding opportunities by regions or basins. Reward regions that are already working together collaboratively.

## 2. What Should the Process Include?

- Throughout the state, present the purpose and vision of a long-term water resources strategy. Ask what people want to see addressed in this plan, such as: what are your primary water resource issues in this region? How could a long-term strategy allow you to get your work done? Encourage input! Provide timelines and Department contact information. More Oregonians will become engaged during the course of the process.
- The role of the Department and Commission should be to hold/host these conversations. Start thinking now about how to engage Oregon communities. Invite both current and previous Commissioners to help host these discussions.
- Ensure that this is a bottom-up exercise.
- We need (but do not yet have) a broad framework in place that describes how to start the process, meet with stakeholders, etc.
- The current statutory framework provides planning authority. Make sure this process develops inside the statutory framework (i.e., the Commission would ratify the strategy and then the Department would manage the implementation).
- The Commission and Department have the authority and responsibility to lead these planning efforts, but not the resources. Put this in writing, formally.

## Next Steps

The above discussion represents another valuable step toward formulating Oregon’s long-term water resources strategy. It cites the statutory foundation and mandate for planning, and notes the vital datasets the Department will need in order to inform this planning work. Finally, it begins to lay out the desired outcomes and process the Commission would like to see. During the next several meetings, the Commission will have further opportunities to shape Oregon’s long-term water resources strategy through dialogue with stakeholders, expert presentations, and brainstorming discussions.