Salem Open House Discussion – June 8, 2010

Integrated Water Resources Strategy Spring 2010 Open House Events
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Headquarters, 3406 Cherry Avenue NE, Salem OR, 97303
Facilitation provided by Sam Chan and Megan Kleibacker - Oregon State University/Sea Grant and Extension Services, and Terry Buchholz - Integrated Water Solutions, LLC.

This document reflects public input gathered during the open house event held in Salem. Participants were asked to identify the water resource challenges facing their community as well as any policies, projects, or approaches that they would like to see as part of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy. The event facilitators also asked audience members to share their vision, hopes, and goals for the state and to provide any education or outreach ideas that would help the public gain a better understanding of water resource issues facing Oregon. The discussion that took place reflects a true brainstorming session where no efforts were made by agency staff to rebut, debate, or prioritize any of the ideas, suggestions, or comments shared during the event.

4:00 Session

Challenges

1. The "implementers" will have barriers because of their responsibilities and the wide range of implementation requirements they each have.

2. Getting everyone at the table - needs to include all water users.

3. Population growth.

4. Meeting the needs of economic development.

5. Working with the different state agencies (DEQ, WRD, and DLCD) and understanding the requirements. Each has different requirements and they do not mesh.

6. Conflicts between agencies and different requirements.

7. County Commissioners make decisions about development and land use without information about water.

8. Decisions are made by politicians and not the experts.

9. Federal agencies also have requirements related to water that need to be met.

10. Climate change.

11. Balancing values for those that favor ecological protection versus preserving the beneficial uses of water.

12. We do not know "how water happens" in Oregon. We do not have good information or data on where our groundwater resources are.

13. State agencies looking at things from the state perspective and not from the watershed perspective.

14. Integrating water efficiencies from large water users.

15. Funding for the natural resource agencies, specifically for science, information management, and field presence.

16. Ignoring the unintended consequences of decisions that are made to protect certain species.

17. Setting practical water quality standards.

18. One size does not fit all.

Solutions and Opportunities

1. Getting everyone that is interested in water to participate.

2. Obtaining the data needed to fully understand water, both surface and groundwater, in Oregon.

3. Conservation and reuse.

4. Plans specific to watersheds.

5. Better coordination between people that are interested in water.

6. Water efficiency.

7. Remediation for flooding through wetlands.

8. Education of all Oregonians on the interaction between energy and water. Consider energy throughout the development of the strategy.

9. Talk about water as an economic development enabler.

10. Keep decisions made about existing standards of water quality open. Provide flexibility to add new water quality standards as new science becomes available.

11. Understand the unintended consequences of solutions.

12. Compile an annotated and readily available source of information about water.

13. Maintain the basin councils.

Education and Outreach

1. Establish a "go to" person to ask legal questions about water or a place that people can go to get information.

2. Identify where different categories of water users get their information and add to it.

3. Look at different ways to get the word out.

4. How much does water cost us per citizen? Express the real cost of water.

5. YES Magazine has an article about how other states have dealt with water issues.

Vision

1. Protection of all ecological flows for ecosystems.

2. A strategy that optimizes ecological protection and beneficial uses.

3. Water becomes a right to all human and living beings and is not a commodity.

4. Water quality increases continuously.

5:30 Session

Challenges

1. Limited groundwater resources in certain areas and fully appropriated water.

2. Limited water sources on the east slope of the Cascades.

3. Many good ideas, but no money.

4. Lack of state resources.

5. Chemicals that get into the water and the effects on water quality.

Solutions and Opportunities

1. Change the water rights law. Need to make sure people that need water can get it.

2. Opportunities for use of all water in the state. Include alternative sources, such as water reuse and graywater.

3. Perception that Willamette River water is too polluted to use. Use the water from the Willamette River and treat if needed.

4. Identify where and how water storage can be done.

5. Create water rate structures and metering for all. If you use more water, then you pay more for it.

6. Treatment and retention of stormwater runoff from surfaces.

7. Look at Washington State's integrated water strategy.

Education and Outreach

1. Education on water treatment technologies.

2. Educate on the Willamette River as being ok to use.

3. Water conservation and outdoor water use opportunities.

4. Education on the safe disposal of pharmaceuticals, household hazardous waste, and other toxic pollutants to prevent them from getting into the water.

5. Education on instream leasing opportunities.

Vision

1. Mechanisms that allow us to share water from an adequate source with inadequate water supply sources.

2. Sufficient municipal water supply forever.

3. Having a much stronger water component to the land use planning process.

4. Need to make sure there is sufficient water supply for agriculture forever.