

Executive Summary

Water is a public resource, essential to our communities, ecosystems, and economic activities. Protection, conservation, and management of our shared public resource and responsible use of public funds requires an integrated strategy based on rigorous data and analysis. In 2009, the Legislature recognized the need to develop a statewide Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS or from here forward referred to as the “Strategy”) to coordinate water management efforts by many agencies and partners. The Strategy is needed to carry out two goals: to **improve our understanding of Oregon’s water resources** and to **meet our state’s instream and out-of-stream water resource needs**. The first two Strategies (2012 and 2017), inspired many improvements in water resources data collection, management, planning, and funding for water projects.

“Instream” as defined in ORS 537.332 “means within the natural stream channel or lakebed or place where water naturally flows or occurs”

“Out-of-Stream” – water withdrawn or diverted from a groundwater or surface water source for a beneficial use

The 2025 Strategy places an emphasis on the need for data, collaboration, voluntary, and regulatory efforts. It identifies areas where incentives or new policies could serve as powerful tools for progress. It also identifies where public and private partnerships could stretch our dollars and further instream and out-of-stream efforts. Just as importantly, **the Strategy does not remove or jeopardize existing water rights or other local, state, Tribal, and federal authorizations. The Strategy does not itself change any existing authorities. It is the platform for prioritized investments in the coming years.**

In 2019, former Governor Brown initiated the [100-Year Water Vision](#) (Vision), a community engagement process to elevate water concerns of Oregonians and call for strategic investments to address these challenges. Completed in 2020, the Vision called for Oregonians to “invest strategically in infrastructure and ecosystems across all regions to support resilient communities, vibrant local economies, and a healthy environment for all who live here.” The 2021 Oregon Legislature made historic investments in Oregon’s water resources by passing a \$538 million water package distributed among many natural resource agencies. This funding allowed state agencies to make progress toward addressing water issues identified in both the Vision and 2017 Strategy. Vision participants called for the Vision findings to be applied to the next Strategy. The 2025 Strategy highlights where Vision challenges and opportunities align with Strategy actions. **To streamline Oregon’s water initiatives, the 2025 Strategy will be the single statewide water planning effort carried forward.**

Document Vocabulary

Since 2012, the Strategy has used specific language to explain and organize goals, objectives, critical issues, and actions. The Strategy’s organizational terms are provided below.

- **Framework** – describes the overall structure of the Strategy. The Framework shows how the goals, objectives, critical issues, and actions relate to one another. The Framework is included in Appendix D.
- **Goal** – The Strategy was designed to meet two overarching goals: to improve our understanding of Oregon’s water resources, and to meet Oregon’s instream and out-of-stream needs. Strategy objectives and actions support meeting these goals.
- **Objective** – Statute ([536.220](#)) requires that the Strategy describe objectives of the Strategy and actions designed to achieve those objectives. The Strategy has four objectives, carried forward from the 2012 Strategy.
- **Critical Issue** – Critical issues describe specific water challenges under each objective. Critical issues are the headings for groupings of related actions.
- **Action** – Actions are identified to address a critical issue. Actions are directed to both agencies and others, recognizing many people have a role to play in managing our water. There are 48 actions in the 2025 Strategy.
- **Example Actions** – Each action includes a list of example actions to show how to implement the action. Example actions are distributed throughout the chapters and included on the action summary sheets in Appendix D.

Document Organization

The 2025 Strategy has four objectives. Each objective is separated into its own chapter, Chapters 1 through 4. Within each chapter, the narrative describes critical water issues, actions, and example actions. Several Appendices have been created to provide additional information and support Strategy implementation.

- **Appendix A** - summaries of Tribal, state and federal agency roles and responsibilities regarding water
- **Appendix B** - water laws, policies, and regulations guiding management of instream and out-of-stream uses
- **Appendix C** - comparison of wording and numbering updates between the 2017 Strategy and the 2025 Strategy
- **Appendix D** – includes the Framework and action summary sheets for each of the 48 actions. Each action summary sheet provides a quick reference regarding who might take this action, examples of how to implement the action, and current resources including existing workgroups or funding programs, if known.
- **Appendix E** – agency action priorities for the next 6 years, 2025-2031
- **Appendix F** – the key challenges and opportunities identified in the 100-Year Water Vision and the relevant 2025 Strategy actions
- **Appendix G** – the 2017-2022 Progress Report highlighting progress towards implementing the 2017 Strategy

Changes from the 2017 Edition

The 2025 Strategy updates the wording of some objectives, critical issues, and adds two new actions. Appendix C provides a crosswalk to review these updates. The 2025 Strategy provides an opportunity to address equity, climate change, and increase agency accountability throughout the document.

- **Equity** – A centerpiece of pursuing water equity requires bringing more voices to the table to meaningfully address the disparities regarding access to clean water across the state. The 2020 [Oregon Water Futures Project Report](#), the 2020 100-Year Water Vision effort, the 2022 [State of Water Justice Report](#), the 2022 [Oregon Water Justice Framework](#), and the 2023 [Secretary of State Water Advisory Report 2023-04](#) all document water insecurities and inequities in Oregon. A new action has been added to identify the need for meaningful community engagement. Equity and environmental justice considerations have been added throughout the Strategy example actions.
- **Climate Change** – Climate change is a pervasive part of life, more so than in 2012 when the first Strategy was published. The 2025 edition provides an opportunity to introduce climate change as the first critical issue in Chapter 3. The 2025 Strategy explains how many actions address climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience. References to climate change have been increased throughout the document.
- **Agency Accountability** – New for the 2025 Strategy, each action is presented in a summary sheet (Appendix D) that identifies the need for the action and detailed information to assist in implementation, including the likely lead and supporting state or federal agencies and partners contributing to the action. Resources, such as funding sources are also provided, if known. Also new for 2025, the Strategy includes agency priority actions for the next 6 years (Appendix E).

Biennial Workplan

In line with previous Strategies, implementation occurs after the Strategy has been adopted by the Water Resources Commission. The statute guiding the development and implementation of the Strategy was updated in 2023 to require a two-year workplan. Following the adoption of the 2025 Strategy, the Water Resources Department will work with state agencies to develop the first biennial workplan that reflects the multi-agency priorities (Appendix E) and the legislatively adopted budget for the 2025-27 biennium. Future workplans will include engagement with agencies, water partners, and the public in advance of biennial agency budget processes and legislative concept development to adequately support Strategy implementation. Workplan development provides an opportunity to coordinate work across many agencies and partners and must be done in a way that protects the public interest and balances instream and out-of-stream needs.