



Oregon

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Crystal Grinnell, IWRS Specialist
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SUBJECT: Agenda Item C, November 17, 2022
Water Resources Commission

IWRS Update and Progress Report

I. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the process and schedule for updating the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) and for developing the IWRS Progress Report. This is an informational report and does not require any action by the Commission.

II. Background

The IWRS provides an inter-agency framework for better understanding and meeting Oregon's instream and out-of-stream water needs. The first IWRS was adopted by the Water Resources Commission in 2012 and the second in 2017. The 2017 IWRS provides recommendations in 13 different issue areas. Each issue area includes multiple recommendations, resulting in a total of 51 recommended actions with many sub-actions.

As indicated in ORS 536.220, the IWRS is to be updated every five years. The Department announced that the next update would be delayed due to limited staff capacity, the significant number of new projects arising from the 2021 session, and to allow some of the 2021 session project work products to be considered in the update.

III. Progress Report

Agencies have been working on development of a Progress Report, summarizing Oregon agency accomplishments since publishing the 2017 IWRS. The Progress Report will provide foundational information for the IWRS update. Information has been gathered from the 15 WCT agencies regarding major project accomplishments, awarded funding, and policy changes that align with recommended actions in the 2017 IWRS.

The full Progress Report will be available in December 2022 and will be presented to the Legislature. Early findings show that almost all of the recommended actions have received funding and staff resources from at least one agency since 2017. A significant amount of progress has been made regarding data collection and sharing. Historic federal and state funding have been distributed to help plan and implement water and wastewater infrastructure throughout the state.

IV. IWRS Team Development

The Department filled the limited duration IWRS Specialist position in June 2022 to help support the update. Since then, The Department has formed an internal working team to provide input on the Progress Report and to help with the update. This team consists of at least one member from each of its major service areas.

Multi-agency collaboration throughout the IWRS update process is critical to the ultimate usability of the document. Consistent with the 2017 update, we have also formed a cross-agency project team consisting of two staff from each of the following agencies: Oregon Water Resources Department, Oregon Department of Agriculture, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. This small team will be the primary authors of the next IWRS update.

Additionally, the Water Core Team (WCT), a collection senior leadership from 15 state agencies with a water nexus, meets regularly to address cross-agency water issues. The WCT is currently updating their Charter and has identified the IWRS as a key guiding document for their work. The WCT has already been instrumental in providing information for the IWRS Progress Report and will continue to provide input throughout the update process.

V. Discussion and Tentative Schedule

The next IWRS is anticipated to address climate more holistically, apply an equity lens to the framework, and incorporate findings from the work under the 100-Year Water Vision. Additional topics may be identified during outreach and engagement.

Additional improvements under consideration for the next IWRS update include:

- Categorization of recommended actions to more easily identify items requiring legislation, funding, and public-private partnerships, etc.
- Creation of a website dashboard to improve progress tracking and transparency with the public and across agencies

The Department is in the process of contracting with Oregon's Kitchen Table to develop and conduct a more inclusive approach to outreach and engagement for this update. Public outreach and engagement are proposed to occur from approximately February through July 2023.

A draft IWRS update is targeted for public review and comment in September and October 2023. The Department anticipates that WRC will consider final adoption of the IWRS in late 2023 or early 2024. A final proposed schedule will be provided to the Commission at its next meeting.

Given that the IWRS has 51 recommended actions with many sub-actions, the strategy suggests state agencies further develop agency-specific work plans to accomplish and prioritize recommended actions. The Department anticipates that will continue to be the approach for the next update. A work plan was created following the 2012 IWRS but was not created following the 2017 IWRS due to staffing and resource challenges. The Department updated its Strategic Plan, which identified priority areas of focus for the agency. Pending consistent staff support for IWRS work, OWRD hopes to emphasize a greater focus on work plan development across all agencies following the next IWRS update to help efficiently guide multi-agency tasks towards a more secure water future.

VI. Conclusion

The Department is actively engaging with other agencies to prepare an IWRS Progress Report, as well as working with Oregon's Kitchen Table to develop an approach for public engagement and outreach. Staff will report to the Commission on the IWRS Progress Report, the IWRS Outreach and Engagement Plan, and the proposed schedule at its first meeting in 2023.

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