

Item A – Project Implementation Update

O R E G O N



WATER RESOURCES
D E P A R T M E N T

Field Services Division 2021-23 Biennium Projects and Priorities

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February 23, 2023

Item A, Attachment 1



Field Services Division 2021-23 Biennium Work Priorities and Projects

The Field Services Division (FSD) has 85 staff located in 23 watermaster offices across 5 regions of the state. FSD staff manage and distribute water across Oregon, working daily with water users to enforce water rights and conditions to achieve compliance, and respond to complaints. FSD staff also collect surface water and groundwater data, inspect dams and wells, educate the public and provide customer service. FSD staff are key to identifying local solutions to water management and scarcity issues.

Current Operations

Water management – Regulate and distribute water based on Oregon water laws and the water rights of record. Gain compliance through education and enforcement. Coordinate with local county code and state and local law enforcement as needed.

Scientific Data – Measure stream discharge and groundwater levels in wells across Oregon. Provide the data to the Surface Water Hydrology and Groundwater Sections for housing and analyses. Operate and maintain 250 gaging stations.

Customer Service and Stakeholder Engagement – Share knowledge and information with irrigation districts, watershed councils, local governments, municipalities, conservation and industry groups to address water management and scarcity issues.

Public Safety – Inspect the construction and maintenance of dams. Provide info to dam owners. Protect Oregon's groundwater through the inspection and maintenance of wells. Educate the public and well drillers.

New Enforcement Section – SB 5561 authorized seven staff for a new Enforcement Section (ES) with 14 new assistant watermaster staff focusing efforts on cannabis and water use compliance.

Re-organization and staff resource allocation – Division managers are optimizing where new staff work to balance workloads and meet fieldwork demands. Training and onboarding of new staff is ongoing. We continue hiring to fill multiple vacancies.

Fall 2022 Field Conference – Field staff will travel to Salem November for two days of training to improve staff knowledge base, improve consistency, and provide for teambuilding.



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Updated August, 2022

Implementing New Legislation

SB 5561 – Legislation investing \$5 million in OWRD to address cannabis water use. Funds added 14 assistant watermasters and seven Enforcement Section staff, increasing capacity to respond to complaints and initiate proactive investigations.

HB 4061 – Cannabis-focused bill that increased penalties, clarified some violations and added requirements for water suppliers, haulers and growers. Currently WRD is conducting outreach and education to affected parties and will update rules to align them with the new legislation.

HB 2145 – Well construction modernization bill that requires well inspectors to review 100% of new well reports and follow up with well constructors to address deficiencies.

Division Challenges

Less water supply, more demand – Multiple droughts have decreased streamflow and groundwater recharge in basins across Oregon. At the same time, warmer temperatures have lengthened growing seasons and increased the demand for irrigation water. Regulation occurs earlier in the season, and in some basins more users are being regulated off to provide water to the senior water rights. Storage projects have not been filling, increasing calls for water and complaints of illegal uses.

Domestic Well Complaints and Concerns – Increased groundwater pumping and less aquifer recharge increased the number of domestic wells running out of water leading to a new workload and new group of water use stakeholders.

Modernization – Staff and fiscal resources are needed to update field data collection and workload accounting using digital platforms and cloud storage.

Customer Service and Stakeholder Engagement – FSD would like to be more proactive in education and outreach with water users, realtors, local governments, irrigation districts, and conservation groups.

Vehicle Access – State motorpool is unable to fill 40 vehicle requests due to supply chain issues. Work inefficiency results from too few field vehicles.

Oregon Water Right Statistics

Total Water Rights	89,595
Total Points of Diversion (PODs)	131,051
Total Irrigation Rights	54,513
Total Instream Water Rights	2065
Total primary irrigation acres	4.5 million
Total Service Area for Field Services Division (Oregon size), square miles	98,000
Statutory Dams Requiring Inspection** (Medium & Low Hazard structures)	826
Observation Wells	387
Active Gages (State, County and cooperative gages)	~250
Watermaster Districts	23
Regions	5

*As of March, 2022. Numbers like total WRs, PODs, acres of use and others are subject to change.

**WRD's Dam Safety Program inspects 85 high hazard dams and assists FSD with training on proper procedures for dam inspections.

Updated August, 2022

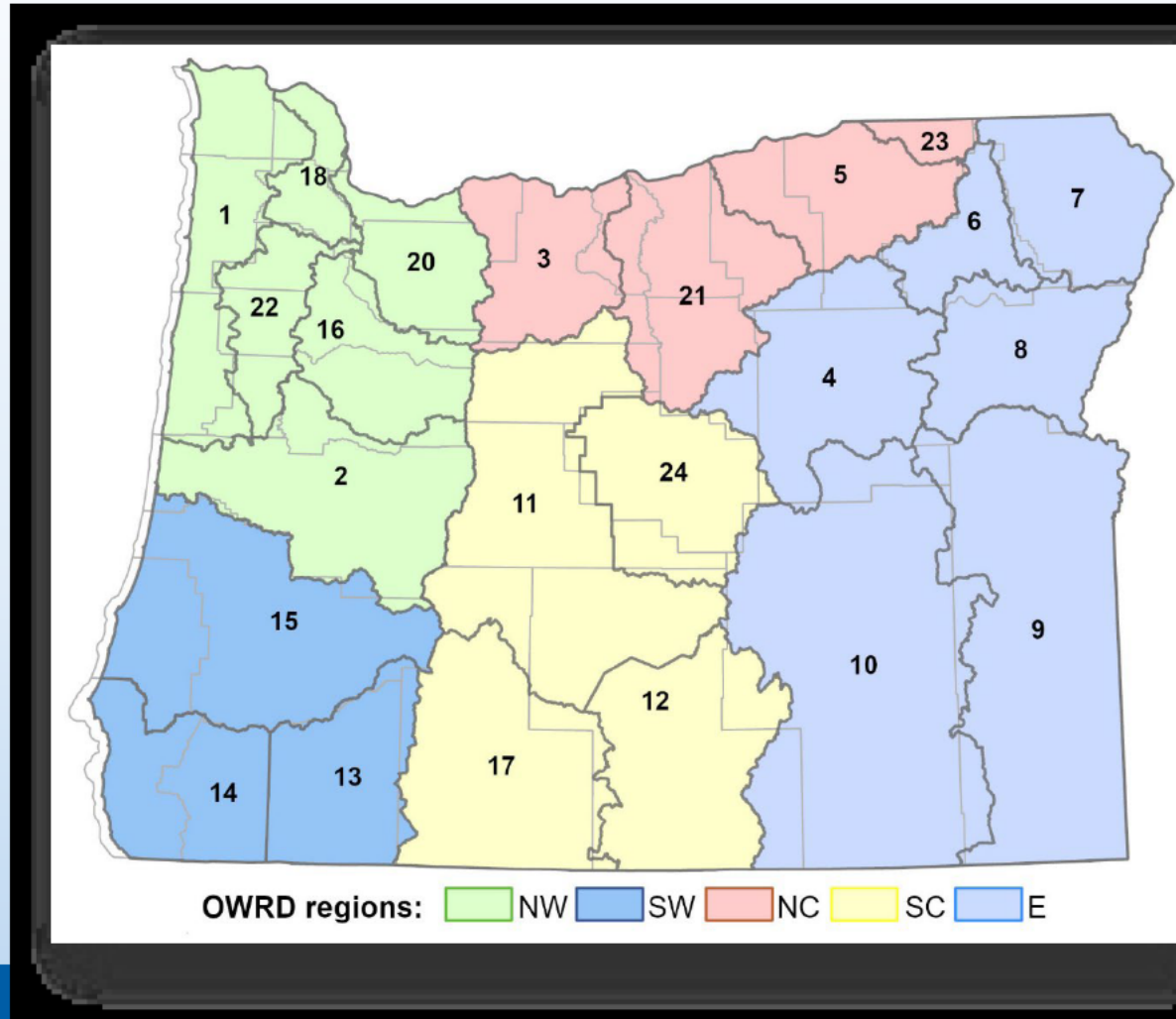
Core Functions

85 staff, 23 Districts,
5 Regions

Manage & Distribute
Waters of the State

Complaints,
Investigation &
Enforcement

Water right's
research & expertise



Current Operations

- Water Management
- Data Collection
- Customer Service & Engagement
- Public Safety



Current Operations

- New Enforcement Section
- Re-Organization & Staff Resource Allocation
- Recruitment, Onboarding & Training



2021-2023 LAB

- Deputy Field Services Administrator
- 5 Regional Assistant Watermasters

SB 5561 – December Special Session, 2021

- Enforcement Section – 7 staff
- Cannabis Focused AMWs – 14 staff

HB 4061 -

- Cannabis focused bill intended to give WRD and County DA's more enforcement tools

Division Challenges

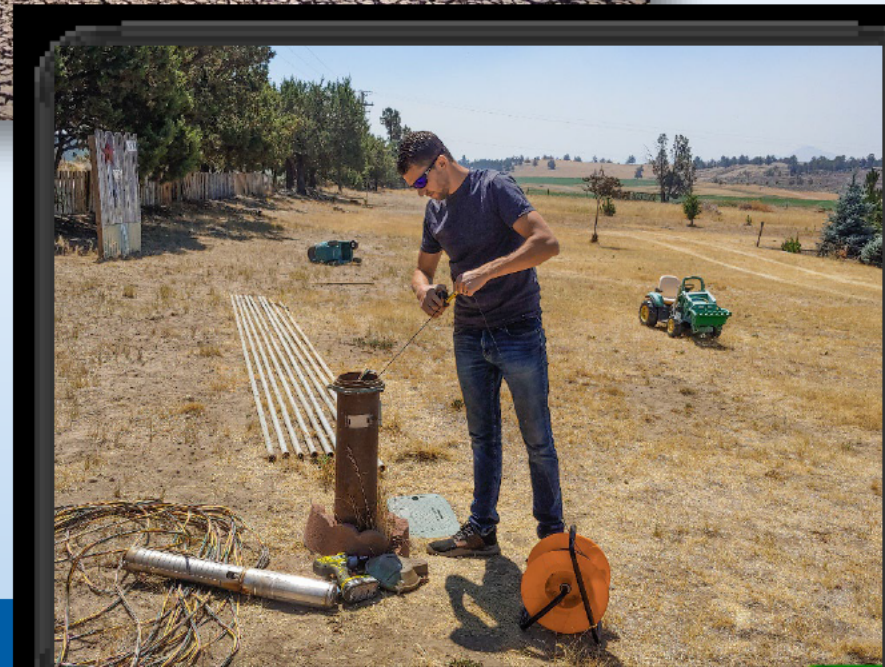
Water Supply

- Drought Declarations
- Regulation
- Storage



Domestic Well Issues

- WARRF and County assistance programs
- Over 1,000 reports thus far



Complaints & Compliance

- Cannabis
- Compliance Checks
- Law Enforcement Assist



Modernization

- Increased workloads
- Embracing new technologies

Engagement

- Education
- Customer Service

Vehicle Supply



Total Water Rights	89,595
Total Points of Diversion	131,051
Total Irrigation Rights	54,513
Total Instream Water Rights	2,065
Total primary IR acres	4.5 million
FSD Service area	98,000 sq miles
Dams Requiring FSD Inspections	826
Active Gages	~250
Watermaster Districts	23
Regions	5

*As of March, 2022





**Thank
you.**