



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Racquel Rancier, Deputy Director, Strategy and Administration
Ivan Gall, Acting Deputy Director, Water Management

SUBJECT: Agenda Item C, November 16, 2023
Water Resources Commission

Project Implementation

I. Introduction

The purpose of this agenda item to provide the Commission with an update on some of the work underway at the agency. *This is an informational report.*

II. Integrated Water Resources Strategy Recommended Action

- This report covers multiple IWRS recommended actions.

III. Background

Since the 2021 legislative session, the Department has experienced a significant increase in workloads as well as staffing, with numerous tasks and projects coming out of legislative sessions over the past three years. In addition, the agency is also undertaking work to implement the January 2023 Governor's expectations, as well as continuing to move forward agency directed projects and priorities. Given the tremendous number of projects, it is not possible for the agency to undertake all of the work at once. Managers are doing their best to sequence and prioritize work, while also hiring and training new staff, and working to scope out project plans. Within this report, we will seek to provide an overview of some of the work and challenges.

IV. Governor's Expectations

In January 2023, Governor Kotek issued a set of expectations to all agencies with eleven categories of tasks to undertake to improve customer service and have efficient and effective public administration. The Department of Administrative Services is providing oversight, guidance and direction on the effort, as well as developing progress reports. Information, guidance, and progress reports are on [DAS's Strategic Initiatives and Enterprise Accountability website](#).

The Department has been diligently working to meet the expectations. Many of the expectations require human resources and/or management engagement in the work. To assist with several of the projects, (DEI Plan, Strategic Plan, and Agency COOP Plan) a limited duration position has been hired to assist the Deputy Director, Strategy and Administration, and the management group with this work. While most of this work is operational, the Department believes it is helpful for the Commission to understand operational components of our work to better understand agency workloads, improvements, and focus.

A few key items are highlighted below:

- Performance Feedback – While the Commission has heard a lot about manager’s efforts as it pertains to hiring, training, and onboarding, another critical aspect of manager’s work is managing performance and ensuring that staff have the information and tools to succeed in their roles. Managers meet with each employee quarterly (April, July, October, January) to formally discuss performance, career goals, employee needs, and other items. The Department was undertaking these before the Governor’s expectations occurred, however, the expectations set a target for this metric at 90% completion rate every quarter. The Department has worked diligently for a 100% completion rate, as we believe that these meetings are important for staff and managers to be able to succeed in their work.
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan – Agencies were required to submit a DEI Plan or Workplan for a DEI Strategic Plan by June 2023. Agencies may opt to include the DEI Strategic Plan within their Agency Strategic Plan. A workplan was submitted with the agency intending to include the DEI Strategic Plan information within its Strategic Plan.
- Strategic Plan – The Department was initially planning to start this work when a new director had been onboarded; however, recruitment timelines have shifted and it is unlikely that a new director will be hired before April. Staff have begun work to prepare for plan development in coordination with the Deputy Director, Strategy and Administration. This project is currently behind; a Strategic Plan is due June 2024. Staff are assessing next steps given the revised schedule for a new director. The Department anticipates engagement with staff, the Commission, public, and tribes.
- Agency Emergency Preparedness – Agencies were required to submit an updated Continuity of Operations Plan to the Department of Emergency Management by September 30, 2023. A team of managers and limited duration staff helped shepherd this project to the finish line and we are pleased to have a plan that we are confident will help us be more prepared to act should a continuity event occur. The Department will need to create internal capacity to maintain and exercise the document.
- Employee Engagement – Agencies are required to conduct an annual employee engagement survey, utilizing at a minimum the Gallup 12 Employee Engagement Survey. The Department opted to utilize the Gallup 12 with an additional set of questions as we see this as an opportunity to get a sense of how we are doing as an agency. The results of these questions will help us better understand where we are meeting employee needs and where we have opportunities to improve, so we can take action. The results will also help us identify potential areas of focus as we begin efforts to develop our next Strategic Plan

and continue work to create a workplace that is welcoming and inclusive to all. The Department has already conducted the survey and is currently awaiting an analysis of the results.

- Other key projects due in December that are underway include the IT Strategic Plan, New Employee Orientation, and the Succession Plan.

V. Rulemaking

The Department has about 30 potential needed rulemakings. Current rulemakings underway are outlined in the Director's report. The Groundwater Allocation Rulemaking and the Division 512 Harney Basin (critical groundwater area) rulemakings are taking significant staff resources and are the agency's highest priorities. The Department is currently evaluating ways to group less complex rulemakings for efficiency purposes, determining whether rulemaking is actually necessary, and evaluating assigning additional staff to conduct some of this work.

Table 1. List of Potential Rulemaking OAR 690 Divisions and Topics

Division	Topic
8, 9, 300, 410	Groundwater Allocation Policy
512	Malheur Lake Basin Program (Harney) - CGWA and other groundwater related actions
TBD	Water Project Community Engagement - HB 3293 (2021)
205, 240	HB 3343 (2023) Implementation: Well construction
TBD / 250 / 380	HB 4061 (2022), HB 2929 & SB 326 (2023) Implementation / Other updates needed for Water
77	HB 3103 (2021) - Stored Water Character of Use Transfers
TBD	Instream Water Rights
TBD	HB 2145 (2021) - Well Repair, Replacement and Abandonment Funding
TBD	HB 2010 (2023) Establishment of voluntary groundwater agreement
14	HB 2010 (2023) Implementation: Certified Water Right Examiner licensing requirements
93	HB 2010 (2023) Implementation: Modifications to Water Project Grants and Loans
TBD	HB 2010 (2023) Establish permanent place-based planning fund
85	HB 2010 (2023) Implementation: Water use reporting provisions
3	Public Records Access and Reproduction
33	Programmatic Mitigation:
79 [Repeal]	Reservations of Water for Future Economic Development
25 [Repeal]	Groundwater in Klamath Basin
76 [Repeal]	Establishment of Minimum Perennial Streamflows
95 [Repeal]	Columbia Basin Water Development Loan Program
340 (87)	Municipal Reclaimed Water Registrations: Hold until after report complete as required by 2023
507	Umatilla Basin Program
514 [New]	Klamath Basin Program
17	SB 718 (2023) and Forfeiture Rebuttals
5	Land use
18	Allocation of Conserved Water
19	Drought Mitigation
380	Water Right Transfers
4	Procedural Rules for Mediation Communications
82	Acceptance of Applications for Water Uses in Addition to Classified Uses

VI. Other Projects

The Department has a number of other projects underway or in the planning phases. In addition to the projects discussed above, other key projects that are or will take significant staff resources include:

- Integrated Water Resources Strategy Update
- Setting up several new grant programs
- HB 2018 (2021) water budgets and associated work
- Water Availability Reporting System Update

The Department will plan to update the Commission on other projects at the next meeting.

VII. Conclusion

The Department is continuously seeking to prioritize the work before it, given that it is not possible to undertake all projects at once. We will continue to keep the Commission apprised of our progress.

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