

Oregon Water Resources Commission

Retreat at Silver Falls

September 7 & 8, 1993

Meeting Summary & Outcomes

The Water Resources Commission, Department staff and guests representing the spectrum of interests in water policy issues—environmental, agricultural, commercial, municipal groups and others—met for a two-day informal work session to discuss water policy directions in Oregon. The goal of the Retreat was to help bring into focus a vision for water policy directions in the coming decade. In addition, a revised mission directive with an emphasis on clear, understandable objectives to guide both the Commission and Department will be based on elements culled from the Retreat discussions.

To frame the Commission's development of a water management vision in a historical and legislative context, the Retreat opened with an overview of the work of the Commission in the 1991-1993 biennium and a sketch of the Department's current programs. The group also heard analyses by each of the Commission members on their assessment of the Department's successes and on-going challenges. Department staff had put together a self-evaluation on this same issue in advance of the Retreat.

Events and outcomes of 1993 Legislative Session were discussed. The group likewise spoke about legislation that did not pass, especially since it has become clear that a number of issues will likely resurface in future legislative sessions.

The Tuesday afternoon session was designed to bring into play the long-range water management vision of as many interests in Oregon's water resources as possible. The group heard from Bruce Andrews, Director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture, Susan Brody, Management Services Director of the Eugene Water and Electric Board and John Charles, Executive Director of the Oregon Environmental Council. Describing an agricultural, a municipal and an environmental perspective on Oregon's water needs, each speaker identified economic factors—for example, value-added production, treatment costs, the limitations of a water distribution system that is not market-driven—as central to any realistic future vision for water management. The panel discussion immediately following served to bring forward the sometimes conflicting

concerns of Oregon's varied water constituencies. This panel of six was made up of Bill Blosser (Land Conservation & Development Commission), Chapin Clark (University of Oregon School of Law), Jeff Curtis (WaterWatch), Kip Lombard (Oregon Water Resources Congress), Joni Low (League of Oregon Cities), David Moon (Water for Life) and Louis Pitt (Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation).

During Wednesday's extended brainstorming session, the group worked to refine and expand upon those elements which Commission members and others identified as critical in creating a long-range water management vision. In principle, Commission members agreed that policy planning and development should move toward optimal allocation and management of the resource. Components of that goal would likely include efforts to:

- Increase the flexibility of management tools.
- Understand the resource and the demands brought to bear on it.
- Restore and safeguard the resource.
- Address concerns regarding certainty and equity.
- Encourage the formation of partnerships to share costs and foster cooperation, involvement and ownership.

The Retreat did not end on Wednesday afternoon. (Well, the fun part did.)

Ideas and concerns that emerged at Silver Falls will be a point of departure for a dialogue between the Commission and the Department as they begin to set program and process priorities. Over the course of the next months, the Department will be working with the Commission to incorporate the vision components into the Department's existing commitments and new legislative requirements and to design an accountable, clearly-articulated long-range Department work-plan.

The Water Resources Commission and Department wish to thank all who attended and especially Representative Chuck Norris and Anne Squier, the Governor's Senior Policy Analyst for Natural Resources, for their input to the Retreat at Silver Falls.