

MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Paul R. Cleary, Director

SUBJECT: Agenda Item III, April 17, 2003
Water Resources Commission Work Session

Long-Term Water Supply Management Follow Up

I. Issue Statement

In anticipation of the 100th birthday of Oregon's water code, the Department has initiated a dialog about statewide long-term water supply management needs, issues and concerns. Four solutions-oriented panels addressed the Commission on this topic at its February 2003 meeting. This report summarizes key points made by panelists in order to facilitate Commission discussion.

II. Discussion

The State does not have a comprehensive plan to ensure it can meet the water needs of streamflow-dependant resources and a growing economy and population. While there are numerous water management activities conducted by the Department and other state, local, and federal entities, these activities are not coordinated under a statewide long-term plan.

A diverse group of stakeholders addressed the Commission in February 2003 regarding statewide long-term water supply management needs, issues, and concerns. In general, stakeholder comments focused on three questions: What does a long-term water management plan mean? What would be the desired outcome of such a plan? What should be the Department's role in the development and implementation of a plan?

Stakeholders agreed that, given the varied challenges facing the state, long-term water supply management needs greater attention. However, there was not consensus about how to (or whether to) move forward with a long-term water supply management vision for Oregon.

The following is a summary of key points raised by stakeholders:

- The State needs a comprehensive water management plan that is an ordered sequence of policy-guided actions that are undertaken to meet specific objectives. The plan should be useful to all Oregonians, sensitive to regional differences, and underwritten by common values.
- Water resources should not be managed by crisis. We need to develop a long-term water management vision that is locally driven and watershed based.
- We need an overarching state blueprint and basin specific plans with specific actions to implement. We need a statewide vision that connects the “dots” of local planning and on-the-ground activities.
- We do not need another plan. The Department should focus on water management by providing leadership, tools, and education; and by requiring water measurement and monitoring.
- The Department is already stretched way too thin; it should focus on being a water management agency not a planning agency.
- The Department can promote wise water management by facilitating transactions, streamlining processes, and working with water right holders at the local level.
- Rather than planning, the Department should focus on collecting data and making it available to the public. The Department should continue to focus on its Stewardship and Supply initiative.
- The best way to facilitate water management is to provide tools and incentives to promote conservation and efficiency.
- The Department should be facilitators of good water management, not planners. As a state we should be developing partnerships and focusing on locally-led voluntary efforts that respect private property rights.

III. Summary

The discussion at the last Commission meeting demonstrates the diversity of opinions on the future of water management and planning in Oregon. Staff look forward to the Commission’s discussion and input on this topic to direct future activities in this regard.

IV. Recommendation

No action is required; this is an informational report only.