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OWRD Sustainability Plan

November 2003



**Oregon Water Resources Department
725 Summer Street NE, Suite A
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OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Introduction

Sustainability is an integral part of Governor Kulongoski's efforts to revitalize Oregon's economy and improve state government efficiency and effectiveness. To achieve a sustainable Oregon for the 21st century, the Governor issued Executive Order 03-03, instructing the Water Resources Department (WRD) and 19 other agencies to undertake sustainability programs.

Water is the lifeblood of Oregon's economy and environment. It makes sense that the Water Resources Department would assume a leadership role in furthering the sustainability goals of our state. This *Sustainability Plan* lays the foundation for providing that leadership. It will help us put our mission, goals, and guiding principles in the context of sustainability. That is, sustainability as a fundamental part of what we do, rather than a stand-alone concept. The plan also identifies concrete, measurable actions that our agency will undertake over the next year to further our state's sustainability goals.

What is sustainability?

Sustainability is doing business with an eye to the triple bottom line – economy, community, and environment. It means using, developing, and protecting resources in a manner that enables people to meet current needs, and it provides that future generations can also meet future needs.

Sustainability is an integrated principle in our agency's mission, goals, and guiding principles. The Deputy Director, as our sustainability coordinator, will lead WRD's sustainability efforts.

OUR MISSION

To serve the public by practicing and promoting wise long-term water management

OUR GOALS

To restore and protect stream flows and watersheds in order to ensure the long term sustainability of Oregon's ecosystems, economy, and quality of life

To directly address Oregon's water supply needs in a sustainable manner that provides for future generations of Oregonians

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Uphold and protect existing rights to use water
- Be simple, direct and accurate in regulations and writings and in all dealings with the public
- Actively enforce state water laws and apply policies fairly and consistently
- Forge partnerships with stakeholders to accomplish water management and stream flow restoration objectives
- Promote sustainable solutions to water supply problems to meet current and future demands
- Increase understanding of Oregon's water resources and make information accessible to enhance public and private decision making
- Rely on creative exercise of existing authorities before advocating new laws
- Recognize flexibility as a key tool for the protection and use of water resources
- Provide educational and training opportunities to improve staff expertise and public service

Developing and Implementing A Sustainability Plan

The goal of sustainability is to improve environmental, economic, and community health for today and for future generations. With this goal in mind, our agency will focus its sustainability actions in four broad categories:

- 1) Facilities and Operations,
- 2) Resource Management,
- 3) Education and Outreach, and
- 4) Customer Service.

FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

- Sustainable facilities
Our agency headquarters has relocated to a building specifically designed to model a sustainable office environment. This building features enhanced natural lighting, a highly efficient heating and cooling system, and electric vehicle parking. Over the next year, we will query our field offices to identify ongoing sustainable practices and opportunities to improve our practices.

Potential State Agency Partner: Department of Administrative Services (DAS)

- Daily operations
Our Department continues to look for ways to reduce waste and cut operational costs. One approach is to switch to email and website notification instead of individual paper mailings. Our Department has recently begun posting Water Resource Commission agendas, meeting minutes, and staff reports on the Commission's website and providing automatic email notification of new postings. The Department has also switched its weekly public notice of applications, rulemaking notices, and proposed rules to a web-based, email notification system. These efforts will result in substantial reductions in waste and operating costs, and we will continue to look for ways to move to web-based, rather than paper notifications.

Over the next year, we will also look for new energy saving practices to initiate such as switching to double-sided printing wherever possible and using electronic faxing programs rather than printed documents.

Potential State Agency Partner: DAS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- Deschutes Ground Water Management
In September 2002, the Water Resources Commission established by rule a mitigation credit and banking system in the Deschutes Basin that can be used to offset impacts from pumping ground water that is hydraulically connected to surface water. The Deschutes Ground Water Mitigation Program is making it possible to accommodate new ground water demands associated with growth in the Deschutes Basin through water banking and mitigation credits while restoring streamflows in the Middle Deschutes and protecting scenic waterway flows and senior water rights. The Department will continue to implement the Deschutes Mitigation Program.

State Agency Partners: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Parks & Recreation Department (OPRD)

- Municipal Water Management and Conservation Planning
In November 2002, the Water Resources Commission adopted water right permit extension rules for holders of municipal and quasi-municipal permits that provide for long-term water supply planning. Given the new rules, the Department expects some 150 water management and conservation plans to be submitted by water suppliers over the next few years. To promote water use efficiency and conservation, the Department will expeditiously review these plans since they are an integral part of planning for future water supplies in a sustainable manner.

Potential State Agency Partner: Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (OECD)

- Ground Water Appropriation
The general statutory policy with respect to ground water management is to maintain ground water resources as stable and renewable water supplies, promote efficient use to maximize beneficial uses, and protect surface water sources. The Department has convened a subcommittee of the Commission's Ground Water Advisory Committee to develop policy direction relating to long-term and cumulative effects of new ground water rights on surface water sources.

State Agency Partners: ODFW, OPRD

- Basinwide Solutions in the Klamath

As farmers, fishermen, tribes, and others seek lasting solutions to the growing and competing demands for water in the Klamath Basin, the overarching goal must be to create balance and sustainability. Natural resource-related industries, communities, and cultures must be sustainable and profitable. Likewise, our natural resource management programs must contribute positively to watershed health, species recovery, and tribal trust obligations. To help achieve that balance, the Department is devoting substantial financial and staff resources to completing the Klamath Basin Adjudication. Completing the adjudication is key to unleashing a full cadre of voluntary, incentive-based tools for moving and distributing water among competing demands. In the meantime, the Department continues to use every tool at its disposal to help meet the water needs of the Basin's farmers, fish and wildlife, tribes and refuges.

Potential State Agency Partners: ODFW, Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

- Streamflow Restoration

Insufficient streamflows continue to pose a threat to listed fish stocks. Stabilizing or enhancing instream flows for fish is critical to addressing this threat. The Department promotes voluntary streamflow restoration through water use efficiency and conservation programs, and water right leases and transfers. While we have made strides at returning water instream, the Department will continue to look for ways to promote its voluntary streamflow restoration tools and to build partnerships with water users and other interests.

State Agency Partners: ODFW, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Public Outreach and Education

To increase the public's understanding of sustainable practices, the Department will create a display in the entry of our new building, highlighting sustainable features of the building's design and describing our agency's other sustainability efforts.

Potential State Agency Partners: Oregon Housing & Community Services (OHCS); OPRD

- Sustainability Training and Communication

To educate our staff about sustainability, the Department will invite speakers to All-Staff and Management Team meetings and may organize brown bag seminars or other informal discussion groups to raise awareness about sustainability goals and practices.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Regulatory Streamlining

The Department has a number of regulatory streamlining initiatives underway and will continue to look for new opportunities to refine and streamline our regulatory efforts.

- Customer Interactions

The Department has established a reputation for quality customer service. We will continue to enhance and reinforce this characteristic through regular training and recognition of staff that excel in this area. In October 2003, the Department developed a customer service plan to identify ways in which we can quantify customer service satisfaction over the next year. We will also continue to conduct business transparently and openly report progress in implementing our programs.

CONCLUSION

In these times of scarce resources, establishing a culture of *Sustainability* can provide the roadmap for successfully negotiating the challenging landscape ahead. Whether it's balancing competing resource needs through our regulatory authorities, or simply finding new ways to get things done in times of fiscal scarcity, operating in a sustainable manner will not be an option in the years to come.

Through the goals and actions in our *Sustainability Plan*, our agency will help lead the state's sustainability efforts. As we move forward under this plan, we will continue to fine-tune and elaborate on the actions identified here. We will also develop metrics and targets for measuring progress toward accomplishing these actions.