



Oregon

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Water Resources Department

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Dwight French
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SUBJECT: Agenda Item M, February 19, 2010
Water Resources Commission Meeting

Process Improvement Update

I. Introduction

Staff will update the Commission on the recent activities that have taken place related to process improvement. Attachment 1 shows a list of three historic backlogs and our progress over recent years.

II. Discussion

The Department has been pursuing two different improvement processes during the past few months.

Lean:

Many public agencies around the country are using a technique, often referred to as "Lean," with regularity and success to reduce backlogs and speed up processing time frames. Attachment 2 is a two page flyer from the United States Environmental Protection Agency that discusses Lean as a process improvement technique. This attachment describes some of the key benefits to using Lean.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has hired a full-time position dedicated to process improvement using primarily lean techniques. We met with John Reel, Process Improvement Coordinator, from DEQ to explore these concepts further. In September, Mr. Reel spoke to our Agency Management Group about the Lean process and its benefits. Afterwards, Mr. Reel worked with the Transfer Section to start implementing the Lean process.

We were very fortunate to be able to hire a temporary employee with Lean experience. Mike Anderson facilitated three work groups through a total of five different Lean exercises from mid

November 2009 through January 2010. These three work groups (transfers, new water right applications, certificates) made several improvements leading to reduced applicant waiting times and more efficient processing. Attachment 3 is a list of some of the process improvement highlights from the three groups who used the process at WRD.

One of the reasons that Lean has proven effective around the country is that the process does not lessen or remove any existing environmental protection standards.

Efficiency Review Group:

WRD has held two meetings with a group of water law attorneys and consultants who are familiar with our processes. This group has brainstormed a list of ideas that might lead to process or customer service improvements. The group will continue to meet in an effort to rank the list of ideas and then, as appropriate, make plans to implement ideas over the short and long term.

Attachment 4 is a list of the participants of the Efficiency Review Group.

III. Conclusion

The Department is committed to finding efficiencies through various process improvement efforts and will continue to reduce backlogs during current and future biennia.

Attachment 1: Process Improvement Accomplishments

Attachment 2: Lean Fact Sheet (<http://www.epa.gov/lean/FactSheet.pdf>)

Attachment 3: Lean Improvement Highlights

Attachment 4: Efficiency Review Group Participants

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