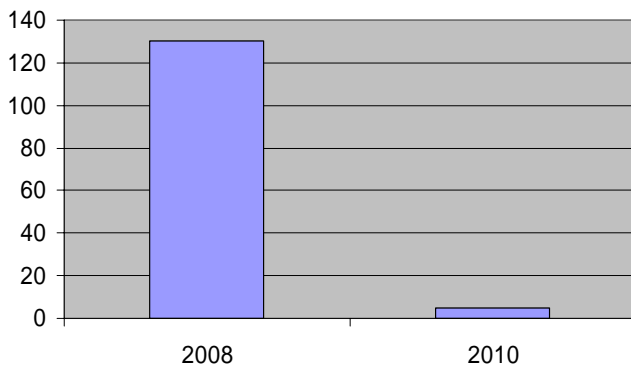


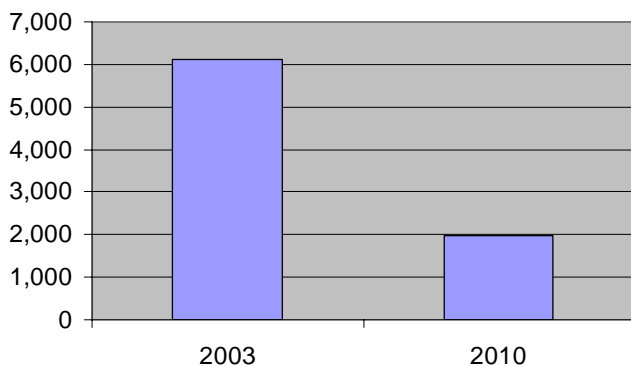
2009 Process Improvement Accomplishments

Groundwater Application Reviews



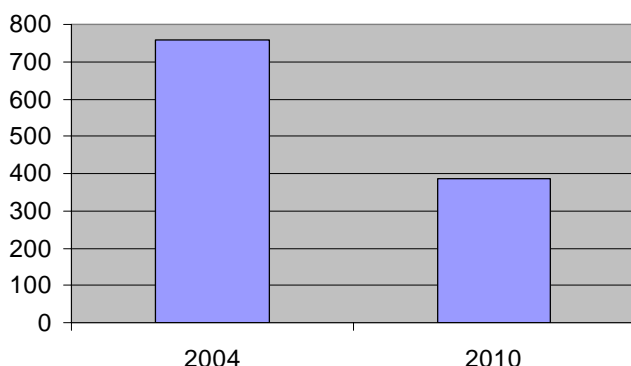
With surface water almost fully allocated across Oregon during much of the year, new water right applicants are increasingly turning to groundwater sources. The Department reviews applications for groundwater availability, injury to already existing water rights, and interference with surface water resources. This work is complex and time-consuming and led to a backlog of more than 130 files by early 2008. The Department undertook steps to decrease this backlog, including hiring temporary employees to help with less complicated reviews, and postponing some groundwater research. By the beginning of 2010, the Department had reduced the backlog to five groundwater applications.

Water Right Certificates



Securing a water right certificate is the final step in “perfecting” a water right. When issued, it represents the water right, providing greater management flexibility for the water user. By 2003, an extensive backlog had developed of more than 6,000 claims for certificates awaiting processing, with an annual processing rate of less than 400. To address this issue, the Department initiated several process improvement and backlog reduction strategies. This, combined with the Department’s reimbursement authority program reduced the backlog to less than 2,000 by the beginning of 2010.

Water Right Transfers



After receiving a water right certificate, water rights holders can then use “water right transfers” to change the point of diversion, place of use, or type of use. This allows water users to move water *where* it is needed, *when* it is needed. The backlog in processing water right transfers in 2004 was about 760 applications, rendering transfers a somewhat inefficient management option. To address this backlog, the Department instituted a “completeness check” when transfer requests first arrived, to catch and correct incomplete files as soon as possible. The Department also grouped transfers by type to speed processing. IT staff automated much of the work, merging basic data (contact information, the water right, and proposed change)

electronically into documents. As a result, the backlog in 2010 dropped below 400 applications—for the first time in a decade.

Continuous Improvement

The Water Resources Department has embarked on two efforts designed to improve our process efficiencies still more.

Lean Kaizen. In 2009, the Department's water rights, certificates, and transfer sections launched a "Lean Kaizen" process, designed to reduce the number of steps required to process these transactions, and reduce the number of person hours spent on each application. The Lean Kaizen process focuses on changes that can be made immediately and for low or no cost (e.g., redesigning forms that are easier to understand and use). The outcomes include better customer service, with paperwork and processes that are less complicated for the public and staff alike.



Efficiency Review Group. In addition, the Department has convened a group of outside experts, who are very familiar with Department processes and transaction programs. This diverse group represents a wide range of water use and environmental perspectives. Likely outcomes from this group will involve recommendations for statutory, rule, or administrative changes. This group of colleagues has committed to help the Department build support for statutory or rule-making efforts that may result from their work.

