



Oregon

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Water Resources Department

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Phillip C. Ward, Director

SUBJECT: Agenda Item E, May 5, 2006
Water Resources Commission Meeting

I. Issue Statement

At its March 31, 2006 Work Session, the Commission asked staff to develop a proposal for a Commission-led **Funding Task Force**, for consideration at the May 5 meeting. The purpose of this task force would be to identify and develop potential funding sources to support core Department programs, as well as proactive water resource infrastructure development.

II. Background

Since 1999 the Water Resources Department has lost 23 full-time positions to General Fund budget cuts. Also in recent years, County-funded Assistant Watermaster positions have been reduced by more than 15 statewide. These reductions have resulted in decreased ability to perform statutorily mandated functions, less timely response to customer needs, and a field presence stretched extremely thin in its efforts to protect senior water rights. In addition, resources to proactively address Oregon's future water needs have not been available. In discussing these challenges, the Commission felt the best opportunity for effecting change would be to engage the stakeholder community in a Commission-led effort to identify and build support for stable and long-term funding.

III. Proposal

It is proposed that a sub-committee of not more than three commissioners be appointed to a **Funding Task Force**. Added to this subcommittee should be representatives of interested stakeholder groups, including agricultural, conservation, and municipal interests. Staffed by the Department, this task force will meet at least three times over the ensuing six months with the goal of identifying potential sources of funding to support agency programs and water resource infrastructure development. The identification of appropriate staffing levels for Department programs and program areas in most need of enhancement may also be a topic of investigation.

IV. Alternatives

The Commission may consider the following actions:

1. Name a subcommittee of not more than three commissioners to lead a **Funding Task Force** and direct the Department to identify appropriate interest group representation to participate in not less than three meetings over the ensuing six months.
2. Require the Department to develop a revised proposal for consideration.
3. Defer action on this issue until a future date.

V. Recommendation

Staff recommends Alternative 1, that the Commission name a subcommittee of not more than three commissioners to lead a **Funding Task Force** and direct the Department to identify appropriate interest group representation to participate in not less than three meetings over the ensuing six months.

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