

Oregon Water Resources Commission
Work Session
February 8, 2001
Salem

Members

Tyler Hansell
Jim Nakano
Dan Thorndike
Susie Smith
John Fregonese

Staff

Paul Cleary
Meg Reeves
Sharyl Kammerzell
Tom Byler
Diane Addicott
Fred Lissner
Dick Bailey
Tom Paul
Don Knauer
Bruce Moyer
Barry Norris
Adam Sussman
Doug Parrow
Bernadette Williams
John Wynn
Craig Kohanek

Others

Dan Bradley
Ed Henricks
Jerry Franke
Lynn Schumway
Steve Schneider
Rick Kepler
Brad Harper
Michael Lancaster
Kimberley Priestley
Karen Russell
Scott Ashcom
Eric Carlson
Steve Applegate
Katie Cate
Andrew Purkey
Pete Test
Walt Trimmer

Written material submitted at this work session is part of the official record and on file at the Oregon Water Resources Department, 158 12th Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97301-4172. Audiotapes of the work session are on file at the same address.

Director Paul Cleary introduced this work session on measurement and reporting. He explained that Oregon allocates and manages water on a prior appropriation based system. All water uses are to be authorized through a permit, license, or exemption; and all water users are to comply with the terms and conditions of that authorization. Cleary said staff recognize how important measurement and reporting are to the proper allocation and management of water, and that the cooperation of the water user community is key to a long-term sustainable measurement and reporting system.

Barry Norris, Administrator of the Technical Services Division, reviewed the written staff report with the Commissioners. He explained that outreach to water users is the primary business of the agency watermasters and field staff. Staff believe that long-range success in a water use measurement and reporting program will depend on finding ways to achieve agency goals through cooperation, outreach and technical assistance; and resorting to enforcement only where other efforts fail. Norris introduced the panel members explaining that today's discussions would provide perspectives from various water groups.

The first panel included Andrew Purkey, Oregon Water Trust; Brad Harper, Water for Life; Karen Russell, WaterWatch of Oregon; Steve Schneider, Oregon Ground Water Association; and Scott Ashcom, Oregon Association of Nurserymen. The second panel included Pete Test, Oregon Farm Bureau; Walt Trimmer, Oregon Water Resources Congress; Katie Cate, Oregon Cattlemen's Association; Ed Henricks, Willamette Industries, Inc.; and Dan Bradley, League of Oregon Cities. Each panel member spoke briefly sharing their organization's view on water measurement and reporting, and responded to comments by the Commissioners.

Fregonese suggested that benchmarks or measurable goals be added to the four recommendations in the staff report to indicate if progress is being made. He said it is important for the Commission and staff to have a strategic plan that would lay out what could be done with existing resources, and where extra resources are needed and why. There is a need to monitor the streams, and it might be helpful to separate the goals of the stream gaging measurement program from those of the diversion measurement program. If there are more diversions than field staff can possibly check, they could focus their time on responding to constituent complaints. Fregonese said that perhaps random checks would be useful. Training water right holders to measure their water use by collecting accurate data and then discovering the benefits of monitoring would surely encourage voluntary compliance. Water users need to know that the data they submit to the agency is used by staff and available to the public. Perhaps measurement device funding through legislation could go toward automated devices that would produce good reliable data for watermasters and field staff.

Cleary agreed that the stream gaging and the diversion metering goals should be separate. And a strategic plan for the management and use of the data would be helpful.

Nakano said the type of measuring device used would depend upon the stream and seasonal weather conditions of the area. He said the Department has made great strides in pursuing water measurement since he has been on the Commission; and expressed appreciation for the hard work of the watermasters and their willingness to attend so many evening meetings.

Hansell expressed concern about adding more tasks for the already overworked watermasters, and the expense of installing and maintaining measuring devices with a limited budget. Reporting can be very complicated and expensive for individual water users. Municipalities

install water meters so they can charge users and help pay for their systems — this is something the individual users cannot do.

Smith said she hopes the members of the Endangered Species Act Work Group might help the Department articulate the goals of measurement and reporting. Water use accountability can be helpful for all the users and provide them with protection. She said she would like more information on the pilot volunteer program in the Rogue and Umpqua Basins mentioned by Andrew Purkey. Smith suggested supporting a legislative bill that might provide funding for implementing measurement and reporting.

Thorndike said the four recommendations in the staff report will fit into agency goals. Perhaps if the people who lease out water rights for instream flow know the flow is being protected, it would encourage self-regulation. Regulation imposed by the Endangered Species Act by federal entities will also add to regulation of water use.

Meg Reeves, Deputy Director, said that in January 2000 the Commission approved a statement that the goal of the Commission and Department was to work with water users to measure all significant water uses and to make that data available to the public. That goal statement has been the guiding principle for the significant diversion inventory and the work of field staff and the Technical Services Division staff. The map showing threatened salmonid species and significant diversions was also created on that guidance and is intended to focus the issue in a manageable degree in line with available resources.

Commissioners agreed that staff should continue on with the strategy of identifying and attempting to achieve compliance on significant diversions. Smith said it might be possible to obtain additional funding support through articulation of goals, time lines, benchmarks and packaging.

There being no further discussion, the work session was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Diane K. Addicott
Commission Assistant