OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

REVISED Staff Report

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Laura Tesler, Policy Analyst
             Margo Mashkovskaya, Water Policy Analyst

DATE: June 12, 2025

SUBJECT: Agenda Item D
             Water Resources Commission

OREGON WATER RESOURCES DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

I.   Introduction

During this agenda item staff will present a draft of the OWRD Strategic Plan. The 2025 Strategic Plan is integrated with the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Environmental Justice Plan (DEIJ). Commissioners will be asked to provide feedback on the draft plan.

II.   Integrated Water Resources Strategy Recommended Action

- 13A Fund Development and Implementation of Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy

III.   Background

The draft OWRD Strategic and DEIJ Plan (Plan) outlines the Department's priorities, outcomes, tasks, and milestones for the 2025-30 period. The Plan will serve as a roadmap, guiding decision-making, allocating resources effectively, and aligning with OWRD's mission, vision, equity statement, and core values.

During March and April 2025, project staff conducted 20 workshops, visiting all six regions, and engaging 213 staff members with a 94% participation rate. These sessions generated over 850 pieces of valuable feedback. From these data and IWRS priorities, the draft plan was crafted, directly drawn from staff experiences and their identified gaps.

Project staff have consistently engaged with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Team. The DEI Team has contributed valuable input on priorities, outcomes, and the development of the equity statement.

After the June WRC meeting, project staff will continue to conduct internal engagement on the draft and conduct external engagement with Tribes and external

interested parties. Their input will be considered for input in the final Plan that will be presented during the September 2025 WRC meeting.

IV.   Discussion

The strategic plan will be organized around four priority areas. Together they are **ACT**, **ASSIST, ADAPT** and **ADVANCE**.

1. Act with Urgency (on critical water issues)

2. Assist Communities with Preparedness Efforts

3. Adapt to Doing More with Less (Water)

4. Advance Agency Workforce and Operations

For each priority area, select outcomes, and tasks have been identified for purposeful focus. In the first three priority areas, outcomes and tasks reflect direct alignment with the Integrated Water Resources Strategy. The fourth priority area advances agency workforce and operational capacity.

Following adoption of the Plan by the director, the Department will continue developing milestones for each task. Internal engagement input will be used for the development of the outcomes and tasks and further refine milestones to best gauge agency progress.

Priority Areas 1, 2, and 3 come directly from the IWRS. The focus of this Commission report and feedback request is centered around Priority Area 4. The four priorities are:

Priority 1: Act with Urgency- Prevent things from getting worse: protect water quantity and quality, and ecosystem needs

Priority 2: Assist Community Preparedness Efforts- Help communities and ecosystems prepare and adapt to water and climate changes

Priority 3: Adapt to Doing More with Less Water- Increase the pace and scale of multi-benefit solutions for people and ecosystems as our water resources become more scarce

Priority 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations

Priority 4 has four outcomes: Modernized Information Technology Security, Systems, and Processes to Meet Current and Future Agency Needs and Requirements, Standardized Agency Wide Operating Procedure and Workflows, Improved External Engagement and Communication with Partners, and Succession Planning for Key Agency Roles.

The strategic planning efforts also include the development of an adaptive framework

to monitor progress and accountability. Regular review cycles will be instituted to evaluate outcomes, adjust strategies as needed, and sustain momentum. This feedback loop is essential for fostering a culture of continuous improvement and learning.

V.   Conclusion

The strategic plan provides a clear and actionable roadmap for the agency's future and the commitment to implement the Department action items as detailed in the IWRS. It is both a product and a catalyst of organizational transformation, positioning the agency to respond effectively to future challenges and opportunities while delivering value to all Oregonians.

VI.   Next Steps

- Present draft plan to Commission June 12, 2025

- Return to agency leadership in June after Commission meeting

- Further external/internal engagement

- Present final plan to Commission in September 2025
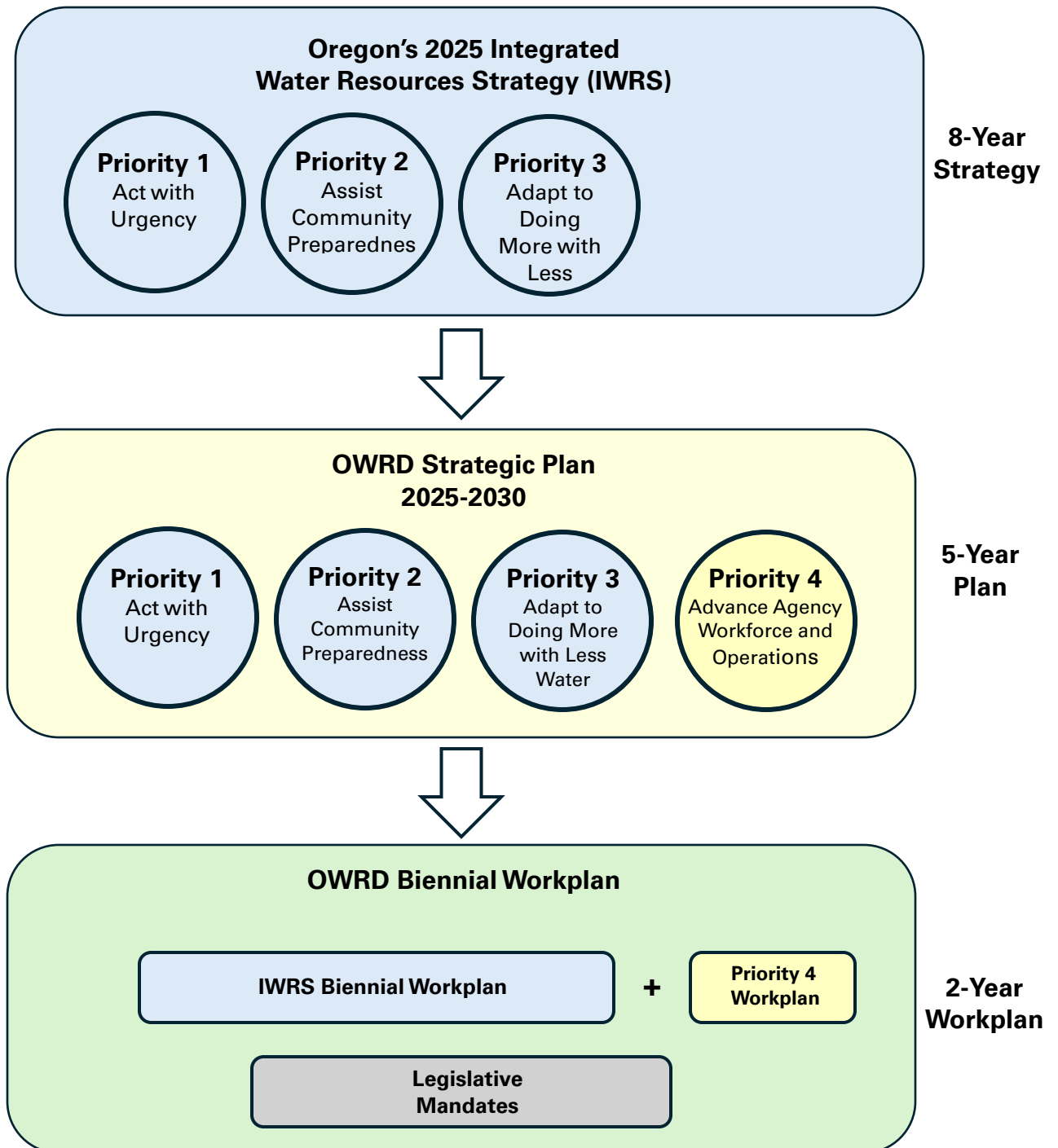
- Publish final plan in September 2025

Attachments:

1. Strategic plan alignment with the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS)

2. Draft Integrated Strategic and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Plan 2025-2030

Laura Tesler
971-375-1465

Margo Mashkovskaya
503-507-7313

Attachment 1. *Strategic plan alignment with the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS).*

Strategic and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Plan

2025-2030

OREGON
WATER RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT

Contents

Message from the Director

PLACEHOLDER

Indigenous Peoples Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the many tribes and bands who call Oregon their ancestral territory, including the federally recognized tribes in Oregon: Burns Paiute, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw, Confederated Tribes of Cow Creek Lower Band of Umpqua, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, Coquille Tribe, and Klamath Tribes; and honor the ongoing relationship between the water, land, plants, animals, and people indigenous to this place we now call Oregon. We recognize the continued sovereignty of the nine federally recognized tribes who have ties to this place and thank them for continuing to teach us how we might all be here together.

Staff Acknowledgement

The development of the Strategic and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Justice Plan (Plan) was made possible through the time, vulnerability, and experiences generously shared by individuals and groups across the Oregon Water Resources Department (Department). Your dedication to engaging in meaningful conversations, sharing personal insights, and shaping a vision for a more inclusive and equitable water future has been invaluable.

We deeply appreciate your commitment to the Department and those we serve. Your contributions have laid the foundation for a plan that reflects the voices, aspirations, and collective wisdom of the Department. Together, we are responsive to the operational needs of today to serve tomorrow.

Executive Summary

The integrated Strategic and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Environmental Justice Plan (Plan) was created to embed equity throughout the Departments operations, programs, and services. The Department recognizes that diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice (DEIJ) are foundational elements that live within all the work we do. All relevant definitions throughout this document are included in appendix C of the document.

Water is a vital and shared public resource that sustains Oregon's communities, ecosystems, and economy. A changing climate and other evolving pressures are increasingly affecting water availability. While water scarcity impacts everyone, disproportionately impacted communities, including environmental justice communities, often face greater environmental risks and systemic burdens.[1]

Recognizing the environmental and systemic challenges that impact water accessibility, the Department developed the Plan with a deliberate focus on DEIJ. Our approach is grounded in ensuring that all communities have meaningful access to engaging with decisions that shape their access to water resources.

The Plan outlines the Department's priorities, desired outcomes, tasks, and key milestones to address pressing water supply challenges that impact those across the state. Our priorities are to **Act, Assist, Adapt,** and **Advance** our programs, services and capabilities to respond to ever-changing water conditions. These priorities are intended to directly reflect, integrate, and align with Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) and reinforce the Department's mission to deliver sustainable water resources management.

By establishing clear priority areas, objectives, tasks and milestones in the Plan, it will help target the agency resources and efforts towards operational optimization and further drive our work towards equity and forward-thinking water management solutions across the state.

Transparency in our work is foundational to this plan and strengthening our partnerships with all Oregon communities is central to the Plan's success. The Oregon Water Resources Department is committed to transparency in our decision-making and continues to strive toward serving all Oregonians by managing our shared water resources sustainability to promote resiliency now and in the future.

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[1] Dalgaard, S. (2022) State of Water Justice in Oregon: A Primer on How Oregon Water Infrastructure Challenges Affect Frontline Communities Across the State, White Paper prepared for the Oregon Environmental Council and the Oregon Water Futures Project (https://www.oregonwaterfutures.org/water-justice-report).

Agency Mission

The Department's mission is to serve the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management through two key goals:

- To directly address Oregon's water supply needs

- 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.

Agency Vision

The vision of the Water Resources Department is to assure sufficient and sustainable water supplies are available to meet current and future needs. The vision of the Oregon Water Resources Department is to assure sufficient and sustainable water supplies are available to meet current and future needs.

Agency Core Values

Integrity – We are accountable for all that we do. We act with honesty and promote transparency

Service – We are dedicated to providing outstanding service and treating everyone equitably in our management and stewardship of state resources

Technical Excellence – We base our resource decisions on law, science, and expertise

Teamwork – We are united in our mission, relying on one another and working together with the communities we serve

Forward-Looking – We seek innovative and practical solutions to the water challenges of today and tomorrow.

Equity Statement

Water is a shared, vital, and finite resource. The Oregon Water Resources Department strives for meaningful engagement, transparent decision-making, and accessible services for those we serve. Together we will build a resilient and equitable water future for this generation and the many to come.

Oregon Water Resources Department Background

The Department manages Oregon's water quantity. Unlike many natural resource agencies, the Department has no federal counterpart, making it solely responsible for Oregon's water quantity management. As of 2025, t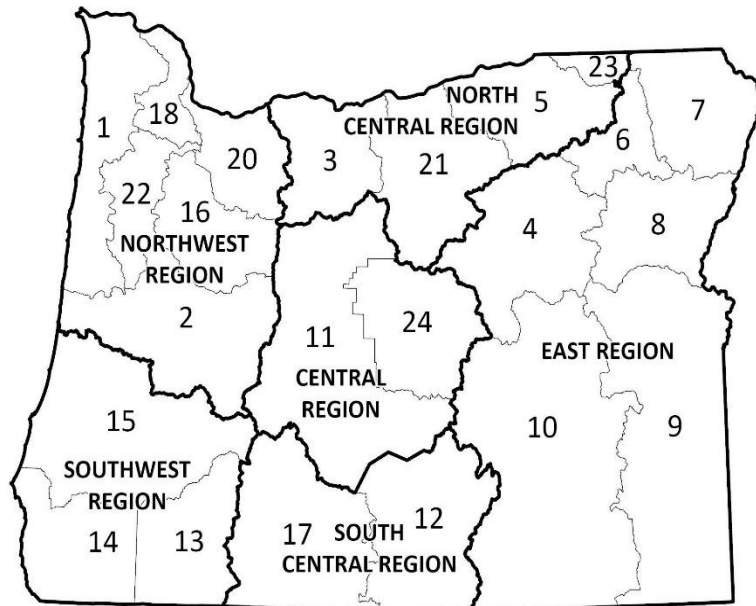he Department operates with 227 employees located throughout the state in 23 districts and organized in six regions as illustrated in Figure 1. Additionally, the Department is structured into six divisions: Administrative Services, Directors Office, Field Services, Planning, Collaboration, and Investments, Technical Services, and Water Rights.

Figure 1. *Administrative Region and District Map*

The Water Resources Commission (WRC) is a seven-member citizen board. They advise on the policy direction and operations of the Water Resources Department.

The Commission and Department seek to understand Oregon's water resources, needs, and coming pressures to meet instream and out-of-stream needs by:

- Collecting and providing crucial data about groundwater, stream flows, and water needs throughout Oregon
- Protecting public safety and water supplies through proper well construction and dam safety
- Distributing water based on the system of prior appropriation and upholding Oregon water law
- Providing technical assistance and funding for planning, assessing and implementing water resources projects to help meet instream and out-of-stream needs
- Processing water rights, permits, transfers, and certificates
- Adjudicating water right claims.

The Department's operating budget is funded through a variety of resources including general funds through the Oregon legislature, federal funds, fees (start card, hydroelectric, water right, dam safety, groundwater, geotechnical, well program), lottery funds, and other grants and loans. See Figure 2 for an illustration of the 2023-25 legislatively adopted budget.
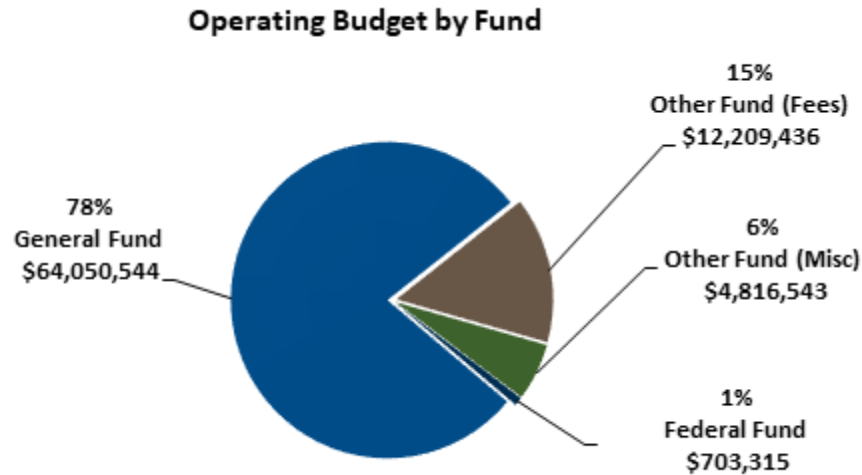
Operating Budget by Fund

Figure 2. 2023-2025 Legislatively Adopted Budget

Integrated Strategic Plan Development

The Plan development was initially centered on internal engagement to ensure the plan reflects a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and expertise throughout the entire agency. Some external engagement was incorporated through the IWRS process to align our priorities and tasks with the collective needs of those we serve and with other state agencies.

Internal Engagement

During planning and development of the Plan, the Department hosted twenty internal staff workshops, engaging 94% of Department staff, and collecting 850 pieces of unique data. The Department also conducted a series of workshops with the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Team and agency leadership. Lastly, all staff were invited to engage after the workshops through a variety of surveys including a Gallup poll and several strategic planning specific surveys.

Internal engagement input was then used to develop the strategic planning process, priorities, outcomes, equity statement, and milestones. The input from staff will further inform the development of biennial workplans in the coming months. The result is a strategic plan that aligns with institutional priorities and reflects the voices of those who help implement and deliver the agency programs, services and mission every day.

The Water Resources Commission was informed of the internal engagement process in March 2025 and will be requested to provide input to the Director on the draft Plan at the June 2025 WRC meeting.

External Engagement

As part of the IWRS engagement process, the Department conducted a variety of external efforts in a broad set of forums to solicit public and water partner input on agency functions and performance. This included written letters and external engagement with Tribal leadership and through updates at the Natural Resources Cluster meetings, director and managers tours around the state, and through upcoming draft Plan targeted engagement.

Internal Analyses: PESTLE, SWOT, Gallup Poll

In preparation for Plan development, the Department conducted an internal Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental (PESTLE) and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis based on feedback from staff, leadership, Tribes, and external partners. The PESTLE evaluates external factors impacting an organization: political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors while the SWOT evaluates an organization or project's internal and external factors to improve decision-making and overall performance.

Additionally, the Department conducted two years of Gallup polls with the purpose of evaluating and gaging staff engagement and experience. Analyzing the Gallup, SWOT, and PESTLE data lightly informed the development of the Plan's priority areas, outcomes, milestones, and will be used to inform the creation of future workplans.

Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy Influence on the Strategic Plan Development

Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) is a central component to the development of the Plan and our agency's work. The 2025 draft IWRS has been developed in partnership with the public, the Governor's office, and other state and federal agencies to address the state's water quantity, water quality, and ecosystem needs. For the Department, the IWRS identifies recommended actions to address instream and out-of-stream water needs now and into the future.

Three of the four Plan priority areas come directly from the IWRS. The Plan carries forward the same structure of priorities, outcomes, and tasks, which will then fold into milestone and the Department's biennial workplans. This approach allows for integrated and optimized reporting in dashboard formats for both the IWRS and the Plan.

Department Strategic Priorities

This section describes the Department's four strategic priority areas for 2025-2030.

Priority Area 1: **Act with Urgency-** Prevent things from getting worse: protect water quantity and quality, and ecosystem needs **(adapted from the IWRS)**

Priority Area 2: **Assist** Community Preparedness Efforts- Help communities and ecosystems prepare and adapt to water and climate changes **(Adapted from IWRS)**

Priority Area 3: **Adapt** to Doing More with Less Water- Increase the pace and scale of multi-benefit solutions for people and ecosystems as our water resources become increasingly scarce **(Adapted From IWRS)**

Priority Area 4: **Advance** Agency Workforce & Operations

The first three strategic priorities are adapted from the IWRS priority areas and the fourth is focused on the key outcomes and tasks to strengthen core agency operations, enhance external engagement and customer service, modernize department technology and processes, and foster a forward-thinking, resilient, and adaptive workforce.

The priorities and associated outcomes, tasks and milestones are designed to align with the Department's ongoing responsibilities, drive performance goals, guide resource allocation, and monitor progress. Milestones will be established to monitor the Plan progress through biennial reporting to coincide with the IWRS progress reporting timelines and create a transparent and consistent reporting structure. The purpose of the biennial milestones is to assess the impact of our initiatives, celebrate achievements, and identify areas where we fall behind. The IWRS follows an 8-year update cycle, while the Department's Plan operates on a 5-year cycle. Priorities 1 through 3 will be reflected in the biennial IWRS reporting, while Priority 4 will be included in the Department's biennial reporting. Figure 3 below illustrates this concept.
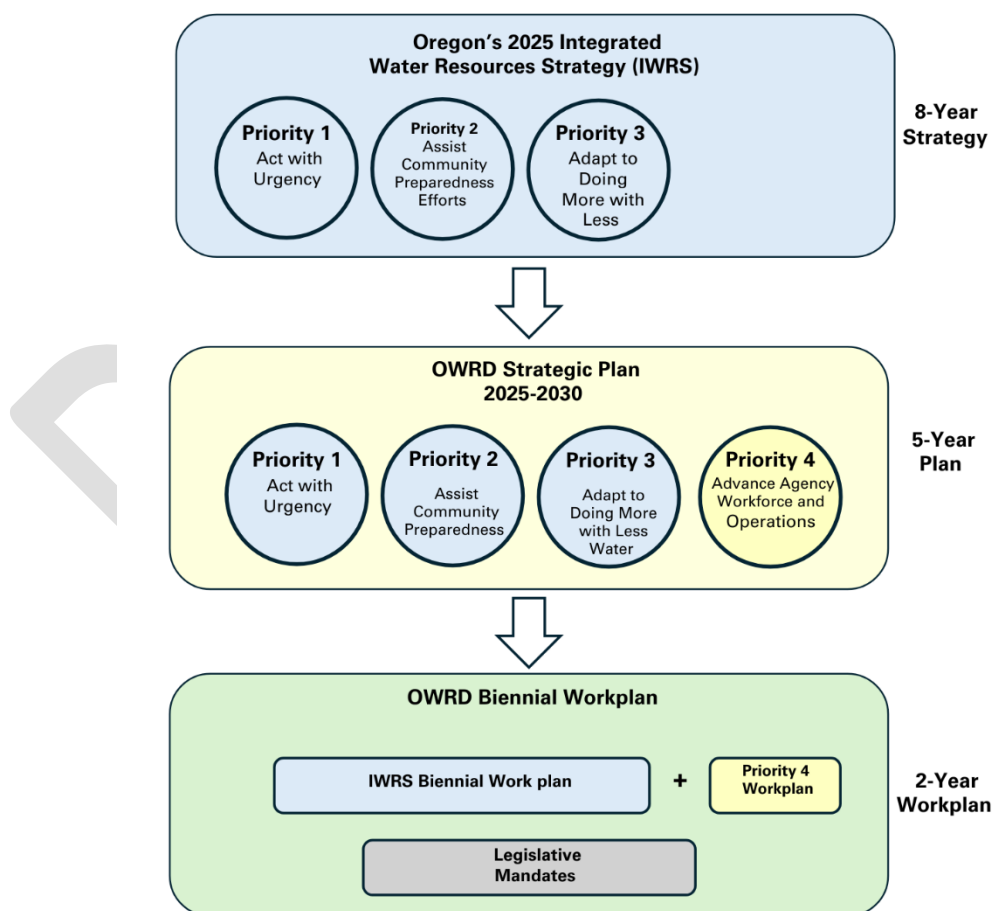

Figure 3. Organization of Strategic Priorities.

Priority Area Descriptions and Discussions

Each priority area is structured to present outcomes and tasks. To track progress, the Department will develop biennial milestones and formulate workplans for each priority area. This format was chosen to help translate strategic priorities into concrete actions. By developing biennial milestones and linking them to workplans and portfolio management, the agency can maintain alignment, accountability, and transparency. Figure 4 illustrates the connection between priority areas, strategic Plan, and portfolio management which all work to operationalize Department priorities.

Figure 4. The connection between priority areas, Strategic Plan, and portfolio management.

Priorities 1, 2, and 3 were adapted from the OWRD specific priorities and outcomes from the IWRS. These priorities were developed over multiple years through an extensive, multiagency engagement process that focused on broad and diverse input.

Priority 4 was created by the Department to address internal operations and workforce development. It reflects common themes and trends gathered through engagement with staff, leadership, the DEI Team, Tribes, and external partners. Notably, there is strong consistency in the input received on the areas of needed focus across all feedback received during IWRS and Plan development (See Appendix B for more information on what we heard during internal engagement). Six themes emerged from internal engagement. These themes informed the development of outcomes and tasks and will be used in the development of milestones, future workplans and the management of the agency portfolio of projects and initiatives.

Governance: Reviewing, modernizing, and making accessible internal policy, regulation, and statutory frameworks.

Workforce Development & Staff Experience: Expanding professional growth opportunities and fostering a resilient, adaptive, and positive workplace culture.

IT Infrastructure, Systems, and Technology: Investing in and modernizing tools and systems to enhance efficiency and accessibility.

Operational Efficiency & Resource Allocation: Streamlining operations, refining and developing processes, and identifying resource needs for optimal utilization.

Internal & External Communication: Strengthening communication strategies that center on audience need, transparency, engagement, and accessibility.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Environmental Justice: Building DEIJ infrastructure to support and reinforce each of the above themes.

The following sections provide a detailed overview of the four priority areas. Each priority area includes a description, a list of its outcomes and tasks, and in the future will include a set of biennial milestones that will be used to track progress. In Appendix B, each priority area is broken down into outcomes sought and tasks to impact the outcome under the priority area. The table below illustrates an example of this format.

Priority Area						
Outcome				Outcome		Outcome
Task	Task	Task	Task	Task	Task	Task

Priority Area 1: Act with Urgency- Prevent things from getting worse: protect water quantity and quality, and ecosystem needs (adapted from the IWRS)

In some areas of the state, groundwater resources are declining, streams lack the clean water needed to support species and ecosystems, and some communities face contaminated drinking water. With droughts becoming more frequent and severe, the time to act is now. The Department needs to take immediate and coordinated steps to address these challenges and prevent further harm. Priority one contains targeted actions with the greatest potential for near-term improvement to secure a healthier water future for Oregon, including updating water laws, improving permitting processes, increasing resources towards compliance, and protecting priority areas.

Outcome: Effective and efficient water management, including meeting sovereign tribal governments' treaty rights

- **Task**: Modernize Oregon's water laws
- **Task**: Modernize and create more efficient administrative and permitting processes and reduce permit backlog
- **Task**: Evaluate funding models to adequately fund natural resource agency work

Outcome: Increased compliance protects water quality and quantity and prevents habitat and aquifer degradation

- **Task:** Seek compliance with existing laws and enforce permit conditions

- **Task:** Improve agency and sovereign government coordination by developing new, and updating existing, memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or other agreements where appropriate, involving agencies with applicable authorities/responsibilities

Priority Area 2: Assist Community Preparedness Efforts- Help communities and ecosystems prepare and adapt to water and climate changes (Adapted from IWRS)

Collaborating on water solutions is essential to address the magnitude of water issues facing Oregonians. As Oregon faces increasing challenges like water scarcity, declining water quality, and climate-driven flooding, we must improve communication between agencies and the public. Reliable and accessible data are the backbone of this priority area. By modernizing and integrating water data systems across agencies —and providing support to the Oregon Water Data Portal — we can provide the information needed for place-based and administrative basin-scale planning and effective, transparent decision-making. The Department can leverage the data we already have to support near-term planning and decision-making while working to expand data collection in strategic areas of interest. To succeed, existing relationships must be strengthened, and new relationships built to respond to cultural, economic, social, and ecosystem needs.

Outcome: Increase public awareness and engagement by sharing critical information about water scarcity, water quality, and ecosystem needs

- **Task:** Increase multi-agency communications and community outreach and engagement capacity to provide timely water resource information, including in multiple languages and accessible to a variety of learning styles.

Outcome: Improved availability of enterprise water data to support planning, permitting, decision-making, and future iterations of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy

- **Task:** Complete the Surface Water Information Management System (SWIMS) update. This is an update to WARS (Water Availability Reporting System).

Outcome: Technical assistance provided to Tribes and local governments to help promote sustainable land use planning and protect water resources

- **Task:** Expand groundwater and surface water data collection and data systems, and improve water use reporting (including smart meter technologies)
- **Task:** Fund and conduct OWRD administrative basin assessments & studies
- **Task:** Continue multi-agency efforts and seek ongoing funding to develop and maintain the Oregon Water Data Portal to integrate interagency data and share with the public
- **Task:** Modernize information technology (IT) systems at OWRD to improve data submittal, management, analyses, use and accessibility, and customer service

Outcome: Increased engagement and technical assistance capacity to support coordinated planning efforts

- **Task:** Continue to integrate and mature the place-based planning program and engage multiple agencies in water planning

Outcome: Technical assistance provided to Tribes and local governments to help promote sustainable land use planning and protect water resources

- **Task:** Provide technical assistance and funding to help cities and counties modify their local codes to confirm water availability with OWRD before approving development; includes updates to public facilities planning

Priority Area 3: Adapt to Doing More with Less Water- Increase the pace and scale of multi-benefit solutions for people and ecosystems as our water resources become increasingly scarce (Adapted From IWRS)

Practical tools like water conservation, reuse, and water right transfers already exist, but funding and agency or partner capacity can limit the scale of their impact. To unlock their full potential, the department should strive to work alongside Tribal, federal, and local governments, partners, and the public to increase the pace and scale of multi-benefit solutions for people and ecosystems. This will require significant investments, including increases in incentives for voluntary efforts that address water quantity, water quality, and ecosystem needs.

Outcome: Increased support for and implementation of water conservation, efficiency or resiliency practices across rural and urban communities to reduce water scarcity

- **Task:** Incentivize and support agricultural innovation, irrigation modernization, and water conservation for agriculture
- **Task:** Incentivize and support water infrastructure projects that conserve water or support resilience
- **Task:** Provide coordinated technical assistance for reuse projects.

Outcome: Multiple agencies' resources are focused on supporting instream needs, watershed restoration, and ecosystem and species recovery

- **Task:** Identify strategies to better align existing funding and funding programs to address priority watershed restoration and protection actions that advance long-term water quantity and quality protection
- **Task:** Provide incentives and support instream flow restoration (e.g., water right acquisition and instream leases) and habitat improvement efforts in priority basins.

Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations

Advance Agency Workforce & Operations is a strategic priority focused on building a stronger, more agile workforce by supporting and enhancing staff and improving internal processes. This includes attracting and retaining skilled staff, promoting professional development and well-being, successional planning, and ensuring access to advanced

information technology. Operationally, it involves modernizing systems, streamlining workflows, improving interdepartmental coordination, and using data and technology to increase efficiency and transparency. The outcome is to ensure the agency can deliver high-quality services effectively and sustainably for those we serve.

The success of the Plan is directly tied to staff experience, efficiency, and engagement. The fundamental purpose of this priority is to cultivate and support an inclusive and resilient work environment by focusing on staff experience, workflow optimization, operational excellence, and portfolio management. Our agency commitment to DEIJ principles is also embedded in these efforts as we believe the agency can ensure that DEI values are not standalone initiatives, but fundamental drivers of innovation and positive impact.

Modernizing information technology (IT) is a foundational priority of the Department's internal operations and external service delivery goals. Investment in IT resources were recurring themes throughout strategic planning engagement, highlighting the critical need to align agency IT and Department investments with ongoing and evolving responsibilities and service demands. Comprehensive IT investment supports operational efficiency, enhances accessibility, and improves the Department's ability to equitably meet the needs of those served.

Outcome: Modernized IT security, systems, and processes to meet current and future Department needs and requirements

- **Task:** Assess and close infrastructure and foundational system gaps to strengthen IT stability and performance
- **Task:** Implement comprehensive IT governance, security, and compliance frameworks to ensure accountability and regulatory alignment
- **Task:** Minimize technical debt by modernizing legacy systems and improving code and infrastructure quality
- **Task:** Thoroughly document existing systems to support effective collaboration and ensure continuity of operations.

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) and agency workflows formalize how work is prioritized, initiated, processed, implemented, reviewed and direct how decisions are made. This priority clarifies roles and responsibilities, and improves consistency, internal expectations, communication, and transparency. Updated SOPs will increase staff efficiency, improve engagement, clarify roles, reduce redundancy, and will help optimize resource allocation. The implementation of SOPs will improve the onboarding process and succession planning for staff.

Outcome: Standardized Agency Wide Operating Procedure and Workflows

- **Task:** Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Administrative Services, Directors Office, Field Services, Planning, Collaboration, and Investments, Technical Services, and Water Rights Divisions.

External engagement and clear communication help the Department fulfill its responsibilities and deliver equitable and accessible services. The Department engages with a diverse array of external groups, including state and federal agencies, instream and out-of-stream users, Tribes, local governments, industry representatives, advocacy organizations, and community partners. By prioritizing meaningful engagement, the Department aims to foster collaboration, improve equity, build trust, and enhance transparency and accessibility for all Oregon communities.

Historically, Tribes and other disproportionately impacted, and environmental justice communities have faced barriers to meaningful involvement in policy development and access to services. Thoughtful engagement strategies help remove these barriers by creating meaningful pathways for public participation and service accessibility so that the voices of all Oregon communities are heard.

Outcome: Improved External Engagement and Communication with Partners

- **Task:** Modernize the Department Website
- **Task:** Implement the Strategic Communications Action Plan and Social Media Plan.

4.4 Career Development and Career Pathways Planning for Key Agency Roles

Career development and career pathways planning supports workforce continuity and organizational resilience and adaptability. Well-structured career planning identifies key agency roles, anticipates future leadership and staffing needs, and develops internal talent pipelines to maintain retention, stability, and service. Career planning coupled with succession planning is a holistic process that includes assessing future workforce needs, mapping critical positions, and implementing structured training, mentoring, onboarding, and professional development programs. By integrating career development and career pathways planning into the agency's strategic framework, this provides sustained operational effectiveness and preserves valuable institutional knowledge over time.

Outcome: Career Development and Career Pathways Planning for Key Agency Roles

> **Task:** Identify and Develop Career Development and Career Pathways for Field Services and Information Technology Roles.

Reporting and Workplan Development

Workplans operationalize the strategic priority areas into specific, measurable outcomes and tasks that coordinate cross-departmental efforts. Workplans also enable structured monitoring, evaluation, and course correction on projects throughout their lifespan. Milestones will be developed to measure Plan progress. Milestones will be shaped and informed through input from internal and external engagement and selected by the agency leadership team based on resources and emerging needs and demands.

The Department is committed to transparency and will assess and report the progress and status of each outcome and task within the Plan on a biennial basis and create opportunities to course correct as necessary.

Appendix A- Definitions

Racial equity means closing the gaps so that race can no longer predict any person's success, which simultaneously improves outcomes for all. To achieve racial equity, we must transform our institutions and structures to create systems that provide the infrastructure for communities to thrive equally. This commitment requires a paradigm shift on our path to recovery through the intentional integration of racial equity in every decision.[2]

Diversity means honoring and including people of different backgrounds, identities, and experiences collectively and as individuals. It emphasizes the need for sharing power and increasing representation of communities that are systemically underrepresented and under-resourced. These differences are strengths that maximize the state's competitive advantage through innovation, effectiveness, and adaptability.[3]

Equity acknowledges that not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place due to historic and current systems of oppression. Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Equity actionably empowers communities most impacted by systemic oppression and requires the redistribution of resources, power, and opportunity to those communities. [4]

Inclusion is a state of belonging when persons of different backgrounds, experiences, and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision-makers, collaborators, and colleagues. Ultimately, inclusion is the environment that organizations create to allow these differences to thrive.[5]

Environmental burden means the environmental and health risks to communities caused by the combined historic, current and projected future effects of: (a) Exposure to conventional pollution and toxic hazards in the air or in or on water or land; (b) Adverse environmental conditions caused or made worse by other contamination or pollution; and (c) Changes in the environment resulting from climate change, such as water insecurity, drought, flooding, wildfire, smoke and other air pollution, extreme heat, loss of traditional cultural resources or foods, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and increases in infectious disease.[6]

Environmental justice means equal protection from environmental and health risks, fair treatment and meaningful involvement in decision making of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, immigration status, income or other identifies with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations

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[2] 2022 State of Oregon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan.
https://www.oregon.gov/das/Docs/DEI_Action_Plan_2021.pdf
[3] 2022 State of Oregon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan
[4] 2022 State of Oregon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan
[5] 2022 State of Oregon Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan
[6] ORS 182.535(2)

and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn, and practice spirituality and culture.[7]

Environmental justice communities are communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth, and persons with disabilities.[8]

Meaningful Involvement means:

    a) Members of vulnerable populations have appropriate opportunities to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment or health;

    b) Public involvement can influence a decision maker's decision;

    c) The concerns of all participants involved are considered in the decision-making process; and

    d) Decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of members of vulnerable populations.[9]

Racial justice means systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all people.[10]

Disproportionately impacted communities means (1) "means communities that face barriers to meaningful involvement in public processes. This may include:
(a) Rural communities;
(b) Communities of color;
(c) Tribal communities;
(d) Coastal communities;
(e) Areas with above-average concentrations of:
(A) historically disadvantaged households,
(B) residents with low levels of educational attainment,
(C) high unemployment,
(D) high linguistic isolation,
(E) low levels of homeownership or high rent burden,
(F) sensitive populations. [11]

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[7] ORS 182.535(3)
[8] ORS 182.535(4)
[9] ORS 182.535(7)
[10] ORS 176.350(11)(b)
[11] 690-601-0200

APPENDIX B: **Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy – Agency Priorities 2025-31 - DRAFT**

	Priority Area 1: Act with Urgency							
Outcome	**P1.1 Effective and efficient water management, including meeting sovereign tribal governments' treaty rights**				**P1.2 – Increased compliance protects water quality and quantity and prevents habitat and aquifer degradation**		**P1.3 – Priority areas are protected and preserved using existing agency programs**	
Task	P1.1a Modernize Oregon's water laws	P1.1b Modernize and create more efficient administrative and permitting processes and reduce permit backlog	P1.1c Update Oregon's Groundwater Quality Act	P1.1d Evaluate funding models to adequately fund natural resource agency work	P1.2a Seek compliance with existing laws and enforce permit conditions	P1.2b Improve agency and sovereign government coordination by developing new, and updating existing, memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or other agreements where appropriate, involving agencies with applicable authorities/responsibilities	P1.3a Prioritize locations for cold water refugia protection and identify tools for protection	P1.3b Prioritize and pursue legal instream protections for ecosystem needs and public uses
IWRS Actions	**10F**, 13B	**10F**, 13B	**11E**, 12A, 13B	**13B**	**10F**, 13B	**9D**	**11B**, 13B	**11B**, 13B
Agency(ies)	OWRD	ODA, ODEQ, ODFW, OWRD	DLCD, ODA, **ODEQ**, ODFW, OWRD	DLCD, ODA, ODEQ, ODFW, OWEB, OWRD	ODA, ODEQ, ODFW, OWRD	DLCD, ODA, ODEQ, ODFW, OWRD	ODEQ, ODFW	ODEQ, ODFW

	Priority Area 2: Assist Community Preparedness Efforts						
Outcome	**P2.1 – Increase public awareness and engagement by sharing critical information about water scarcity, water quality, and ecosystem needs**	**P2.2 – Improved availability of enterprise water data to support planning, permitting, decision-making, and future iterations of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy**					
Task	P2.1a Increase multi-agency communications and community outreach capacity to provide timely water resource information, including in multiple languages and accessible to a variety of learning styles	P2.2a Complete the Surface Water Information Management System (SWIMS) update	P2.2b Expand groundwater and surface water data collection and systems and improve water use reporting (including smart meter technologies)	P2.2c Fund and conduct OWRD administrative basin assessments & studies	P2.2d Continue multi-agency efforts and seek ongoing funding to develop and maintain the Oregon Water Data Portal to integrate interagency data and share with the public	P2.2e Prioritize and conduct instream flow studies	P2.2f Modernize information technology (IT) systems at OWRD to improve data submittal, management, analyses, use and accessibility, as well as customer service
IWRS Actions	**8C**, 13B	**1A**, 13B	**1A**, 3A, 13B	**1A**, 1B, 1C, 1D, 13B	**1C**, 13B	**2A**, 13B	3A, **13B**
Agency(ies)	ODA, ODEQ, ODFW, OWRD	ODEQ, ODFW, **OWRD**	ODEQ, ODFW, **OWRD**	ODEQ, ODFW, **OWRD**	DLCD, ODA, **ODEQ**, ODFW, OWEB, OWRD	ODEQ, **ODFW**	OWRD

APPENDIX B: **Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy – Agency Priorities 2025-31 - DRAFT**

	Priority Area 2: Assist Community Preparedness Efforts - CONTINUED						
Outcome	**P2.3 – Increased engagement and technical assistance capacity to support coordinated planning efforts**			**P2.4 – Technical assistance provided to Tribes and local governments to help promote sustainable land use planning and protect water resources**			
Task	P2.3a Continue to integrate and mature the place-based planning program and engage multiple agencies in water planning	P2.3b Provide technical assistance to help public water systems and communities develop drinking water source protection plans	P2.3c Provide staff capacity to co-create Agricultural Water Quality Management Area and Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plans with agricultural producers to improve water quality	P2.4a Provide additional regional representatives to provide land use planning technical assistance and circuit riders for cities, counties, and Tribes	P2.4b Provide technical assistance and funding to help cities and counties modify their local codes to confirm water availability with OWRD before approving development; includes updates to public facilities planning	P2.4c Make one of the conditions to qualify for local jurisdiction Economic Opportunity grants to involve OWRD	P2.4d Provide technical assistance and funding to help cities and counties modify their local codes to support implementation of TMDLs
IWRS Actions	**9A**, 9E, 13B	**12A**, 13B	9A, 12B, **12C**, 13B	**6A**, 13B	**6A**, 13B, 13C	**6A**, 13B	**6A**, 12C, 13B
Agency(ies)	DLCD, ODA, ODEQ, ODFW, OWEB, **OWRD**	ODEQ	ODA, ODEQ	DLCD	**DLCD**, OWRD	**DLCD**, OWRD	**DLCD**, ODEQ

	Priority Area 3: Adapt to Doing More with Less						
Outcome	**P3.1 - Increased support for and implementation of water conservation, efficiency or resiliency practices across rural and urban communities to reduce water scarcity**			**P3.2 – Multiple agencies' resources focused to support instream needs, watershed restoration, and ecosystem and species recovery**			**P3.3 – Increased investment in source water protection and watershed restoration to secure long-term water quantity and quality protection for drinking water sources**
Task	P3.1a Incentivize and support agricultural innovation, irrigation modernization, and water conservation for agriculture	P3.1b Incentivize and support water infrastructure projects that conserve water and/or support resilience	P3.1c Provide coordinated technical assistance for reuse projects	P3.2a Identify strategies to better align existing funding and funding programs to address priority watershed restoration and protection actions that advance long-term water quantity and quality protection	P3.2b Provide incentives and support instream flow restoration (e.g., water right acquisition and instream leases) and habitat improvement efforts in priority basins	P3.2c Provide incentives and support to protect existing resources on agricultural lands	P3.3a Increase incentives and support for projects that protect drinking water sources
IWRS Actions	10A, **13C**	7A, 10A, **13C**	10B, **13B**	11A-11E, 13B, **13C**	11A-11E, 13B, **13C**	10A-10E, 11A, 13B, **13C**	12A, **13C**
Agency(ies)	ODA, OWEB, OWRD	**ODEQ**, OWEB, OWRD	**ODEQ**, ODFW, OWRD	ODEQ, ODFW, OWEB, OWRD	ODEQ, ODFW, OWEB, OWRD	DLCD, ODA, ODFW, OWEB	ODEQ, OWEB

Agency Acronyms:	
DLCD – Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development	**ODFW –** Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
ODA – Oregon Department of Agriculture	**OWEB –** Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
ODEQ – Oregon Department of Environmental Quality	**OWRD –** Oregon Water Resources Department

Agency acronyms in **bold** will indicate the lead agency

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Appendix B- Priority Area Dashboard

	Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations				
Outcome	P4.1 Modernized Informational Technology Security, Systems, and Processes to Meet Current and Future Agency Needs and Requirements				
Tasks	Assess and Close Infrastructure and Foundational System Gaps to Strengthen IT Stability and Performance	Implement Comprehensive IT Governance, Security, and Compliance Frameworks to Ensure Accountability and Regulatory Alignment	Publish IT Services and Establish Standardized Work Intake Processes to Streamline Operations and Improve Service Delivery	Minimize Technical Debt by Modernizing Legacy Systems and Improving Code and Infrastructure Quality	Thoroughly Document Existing Systems to Support Effective Collaboration and Ensure Continuity of Operations

	Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations					
Outcome	P4.2 Standardized Agency Wide Operating Procedure and Workflows					
Tasks	Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Planning, Collaboration and Investments Division	Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Field Services Division	Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Water Rights Division	Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Director's Office	Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Technical Services Division	Prioritize, update, and develop SOPs and workflows for Administrative Services Division

Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations	
Outcome	P4.3 Improved External Engagement and Communication with Partners
Tasks	Modernize the Department Website · Implement the Strategic Communications Action Plan

Priority Area 4: Advance Agency Workforce & Operations	
Outcome	P4.4 Career Development and Career Pathways Planning for Key Agency Roles
Tasks	Identify and Develop Career Development and Career Pathways for Key Information Technology Roles · Identify and Develop Career Development and Career Pathways for Key Field Services Roles

Appendix C- Internal Engagement Summary

This section expands on the key themes identified during the internal engagement process, which was designed to encourage broad participation and diverse input. Conducted through surveys and workshops with staff, leadership, and the DEI Team, the process facilitated conversations that helped shape our understanding of key priorities and were used to develop the objectives, tasks, and will be used to draft future milestones and workplans.

Priority Area 1 - Act with Urgency

What we heard: Agency staff and leadership recognize the importance of reevaluating administrative rules to ensure clarity, policy alignment, relevance, and integration of DEIJ principles. Additionally, there is strong support for updating the water right and transfer application review systems, eliminating backlogs, and improving water rights permit system, digitization of records and application processes. Streamlining these systems improves accessibility and customer service and reduces, reduce administrative burdens. Staff and leadership recognize the importance of reevaluating administrative rules to ensure clarity, policy alignment, relevance, and integration of DEIJ principles.   There is also wide support for improving of agency enforcement of rules and acquiring increased compliance staff to make the agency more effective in protecting limited surface and groundwater resources. Protecting ecosystem needs is a priority and working towards assuring the agency acquires the concrete authority to do so is a good idea.

Priority Area 2 - Assist Community Preparedness Efforts

What we heard: Staff and leadership expressed a strong commitment to being proactive in their outreach and engagement efforts, emphasizing the importance of tailoring their approach thoughtfully and strategically to the unique needs of each community they serve. Planning and Collaboration staff need to engage using methods that are community-specific and grounded in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) principles. There is a shared desire to enhance operational efficiency and strengthen interagency communication networks- efforts that will foster deeper relationships, increase transparency, and support more equitable and informed decision-making. Staff are also dedicated to completion of the Water Use Reporting System update to the new Surface Water Information Modeling System (SWIMS) by 2030.

Priority Area 3 - Adapt to Doing More with Less Water

What we heard: Staff and leadership expressed the importance of engaging with Tribes and honoring recognized or existing treating rights as a high priority. Staff also support proactively working in important areas such as Critical Groundwater Areas.

Priority Area 4 - Advance Agency Workforce & Operations

What we heard: Staff and leadership are motivated and eager to address identified internal barriers to strengthen communication, efficiency, transparency, and accountability across the agency. This includes a clear desire to modernize and formalize internal processes, enhance IT systems, and develop succession planning strategies. The outcomes and milestones associated with these priorities are rooted in internal engagement and further informed by insights gathered through external partner input. There is a desire to modernize and formalize internal processes, enhance IT systems, and develop succession planning strategies. The outcomes and milestones associated with these priorities are rooted in internal engagement and further informed by insights gathered through external partner input.