



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Water Resources Department

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Water Resources Commission

FROM: Brenda Bateman, Senior Policy Coordinator and
Alyssa Mucken, IWRS Policy Coordinator

SUBJECT: Agenda Item D, April 19, 2012
Water Resources Work Session

Integrated Water Resources Strategy Discussion

I. Introduction

During this agenda item, Commission members will receive a briefing from the Integrated Water Resources Strategy (IWRS) Project Team, and will have an opportunity to discuss next steps related to document content, adoption, and implementation. At the conclusion of this informational item, staff recommend that the Commission reserve time for final public comments on the IWRS.

Topics to be covered include:

- Debrief from March 8 Policy Advisory Group Meeting
- Meetings with Boards and Commissions
- Public comments received through March 15
- Planned revisions to the December 2011 Discussion Draft
- Calendar and Next Steps

II. Debrief from March 8 Policy Advisory Group Meeting

On March 8, 2012, the IWRS Policy Advisory Group held its last meeting to assist in the development of Oregon's first Integrated Water Resources Strategy. Governor Kitzhaber spent a few minutes visiting with the advisory group members, thanking them for their hard work, thoughtful approach, and volunteer hours spent on the development of Oregon's first Integrated Water Resources Strategy. The Governor committed his support to implementing the Strategy, "bringing the resources of the administration to actually make this happen."

During the meeting, the Group reached a "thumbs up" consensus on the remaining Recommended Actions in the Strategy. As before, the group noted additions or changes it would like to see made, as part of the approval process.

Members spent significant time discussing the scale, institutional composition, and implementation of “place-based planning.” The group generally agreed that it would be beneficial for communities to engage in a water resource planning process that would inform Integrated Water Resources Strategy development at the state level. The purpose would be for communities to better understand and meet their water resource needs, both instream and out-of-stream. The role of the state would be to ensure that planning comports with state and federal regulations, to provide a template of questions to guide the planning process, and to develop incentives that would benefit those communities who participate.

Members also discussed issues that need more attention in the IWRS document. Members agreed with the Water Resources Commissions’ advice (January 2012), to re-write the Executive Summary to more clearly link needs, objectives, and recommended actions. In particular, members asked the Project Team to take the time to set a broader context for this discussion, and to give credit to Oregon for all of the forward-looking policies and tools it has already put into place.

The Policy Advisory Group advised against marking Recommended Actions with keys, because they are all important. Instead, they suggested that the Project Team clearly call out those Recommended Actions planned to move forward during the implementation phase (2012-17), particularly those requiring legislative action during the 2013-15 biennium.

The meeting wrapped up with members noting that they have valued their experience with the PAG over the past two years, and indicating their willingness to help advocate for and implement the IWRS in subsequent years and months.

III. Meetings with Boards and Commissions

Chair John Jackson and WRD staff have visited with a number of boards and commissions during the past several weeks. These visits are designed to request letters of endorsement of the IWRS, sent from the state’s boards and commissions to their peers in the Water Resources Commission. Although the authorizing language of HB 3369 (2009) requires the WRC to “notify” the Environmental Quality Commission, Fish and Wildlife Commission, and Board of Agriculture, of adoption of the Strategy, this request moves a step further. The Water Resources Commission and Policy Advisory Group strongly encouraged staff to reach out to additional boards and commissions and to specifically seek high-level letter of endorsement of the IWRS, so that these letters can inform the adoption process, scheduled for August 2, 2012.

As of April 1, visits have included the Environmental Quality Commission, Fish and Wildlife Commission, Board of Agriculture, Board of Forestry, Governing Board for Geology and Mineral Industries, and Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. Additional visits are scheduled for the Marine Board, and Land Conservation and Development Commission.

IV. Public Comments Received through March 15

During the course of developing Oregon's first Integrated Water Resources Strategy, the Project Team has brought seven rounds of public comment to the Water Resources Commission. Through this process, the Department has heard from many individuals and organizations who are not part of the Department's traditional stakeholder group, it has been informative and valuable to receive their input.

This final round of public comment focused on the December 2011 Discussion Draft, and comments received during the comment period from December 22, 2011 through March 15, 2012.

At the close of the public comment on March 15, the IWRS Project Team had received comments from 46 individuals and organizations. These comments are included as Attachment 1. Generally supportive of the public process and time invested in the Strategy, commenters offered a number of specific suggestions regarding tone, background text, and recommended actions.

As in the past, comments represented a wide range of interests and perspectives. Twenty of the 46 comments came from individuals. Twenty-six comments came from organizations: 19 from membership associations, four from public entities (city, county, and tribal governments), and three from private agricultural businesses.

Their comments and suggestions are folded into the section below, "V. Planned Revisions."

V. Planned Revisions to the December 2011 Discussion Draft

Several comments received during the public comment period focused on tone and context. For instance, commenters felt the document does not give enough credit to the foundation Oregon has already laid, in terms of forward-looking policies, scientific tools, and data. Commenters asked that the document take a more positive tone, focusing on past accomplishments and future opportunities. Commenters asked that Oregon's agricultural industry get more credit for both its economic and environmental achievements. Commenters also asked to see more text fleshed out related to environmental justice, the role of the federal government, the need to protect instream flows, and the need for additional storage. Both the Executive Summary and the full document can accommodate these changes. See a revised, draft Executive Summary in Attachment 2.

Next, commenters felt that the document contains a lot of useful background information, but that it gets in the way of telling a coherent and succinct story: what does Oregon need to do next in its water planning, why, and how. Much of the background information can be moved to an appendix or separate workproduct where it is still accessible, but does not impede the flow of the document.

Commenters also provided a number of technical corrections, citations, or examples, which the Project Team will fold in as appropriate.

Commenters agreed with the Water Resources Commission's assessment that each guest essay on techniques and technologies needs to include a disclaimer ("opinion is solely that of the author"), and possibly further editing to remove as much editorializing and advertising as possible.

Commenters asked to see the "bottom line" sooner and more clearly in the document. While the Executive Summary will include tasks to be implemented in the next biennium, a wrap-up chapter in the IWRS will include a detailed workplan, with more detail about lead agencies, dollar figures, and staffing needs. See a revised, draft Workplan Chapter in Attachment 3.

The final version of the IWRS will have "Recommended Actions" distributed throughout the text, instead of confined to the end of each chapter. This will enable the text to come to a logical conclusion, sooner, offering a Recommended Action immediately after describing specific needs and challenges.

VI. Calendar and Next Steps

Meetings with Boards and Commissions will continue through April. The Project Team has requested letters of endorsement from each by June 1.

The Project Team is committed to delivering a completed Integrated Water Resources Strategy to the Water Resources Commission during May 2012.

Also in May, the Project Team plans to develop a video (powerpoint slides accompanied by audio) to post on-line and describe what is in the IWRS and why it is needed.

The Water Resources Commission is scheduled to consider the Integrated Water Resources Strategy for adoption during its August 2, 2012 meeting.

Implementation begins immediately, thereafter, with staff developing budget and legislative requests for the Governor's Office to consider in preparation for the 2013 Legislative Session.

Attachment 1: Public comments received through March 15, 2012

Attachment 2: Revised Draft Executive Summary

Attachment 3: Revised Draft Conclusion: Five-Year IWRS Workplan (2012-2017)

Brenda Bateman

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