



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 I, April 20, 2012
Water Resources Commission Meeting

Legislative Wrap Up and Next Steps

I. Introduction

During February 2012, Oregon's 76th Legislative Assembly convened in Salem, in the first of its "annual sessions," as directed by the voters in November 2010. With almost 300 bills to consider, Legislators remained busy from February 1 through March 5. The session lasted 34 days; sessions in even-numbered years are to last no longer than 35 days.

The Department sponsored no bills during the one-month session.

This report contains brief descriptions of three bills that the Water Resources Department tracked, as well as a look ahead to the 2013 Legislative Session. The Commission will be asked to approve the proposed legislative requests for further development.

II. Review of Three Bills

The Water Resources Department tracked three water-related bills during 2012: House Bill 4101 known as the "Columbia River Bill," Senate Bill 1510 regarding "Ecosystem Services," and Senate Bill 1513 about "Split Season Leasing." None passed.

House Bill 4101, sponsored by Rep. Mike McLane (R-Powell Butte), would have instructed the Department to aggressively pursue development of at least 100,000 acre feet water from the Columbia for irrigated agriculture. Various versions of the bill differed as to the geographic scope of the bill, the convener of any workgroups, season of water withdrawal, source and amount of funding, and sideboards. Development of Columbia River water is prominently featured in the Integrated Water Resources Strategy and future work will continue under the auspices of the Water Resources Department.

Senate Bill 1510, sponsored by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, would have provided high-level policy encouragement to agencies to consider ecosystem services and market-based tools in their management of natural resources. This concept has been discussed extensively as part of the Integrated Water Resources Strategy, and both public and

private partners continue to work together on technical protocols to quantify and place a value upon habitat and stream restoration activities.

Senate Bill 1513, also sponsored by the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, would have lifted the 2014 sunset from the Department's Split Season Leasing Program. This is one of the Department's smaller programs, which has been in place for a decade. The program allows irrigators to place some of their water right instream during part of the irrigation season, to the benefit of both irrigation and instream uses. The Department plans to ask the Governor to bring a bill to the 2013 Legislature, requesting permission to continue the program. The Department will also bring an evaluation of the Split Season Leasing Program thus far to the November 2012 Water Resources Commission meeting.

III. A Look Ahead to the 2013 Legislative Session

The 2013 Legislature will convene on January 14, 2013 swear-in newly elected officials, elect legislative leaders, adopt rules, organize and appoint committees, and begin introducing bills. The 2013 Session will be a longer session, designed for no longer than 160 days, to address both biennial budgets as well as public policy matters. The Water Resources Department will partner with its sister natural resource agencies to submit budget requests and legislative concepts. Many of these requests will emerge from the Integrated Water Resources Strategy, but some are limited to the Water Resources Department only, such as renewing a limited duration position or removing the sunset from the Split Season Leasing program.

Water Resources Department staff met with a dozen stakeholders on March 21, 2012 to present and discuss its preliminary legislative proposals. See the resulting, attached proposals.

Attachment 1: Proposed OWRD Legislative Concepts for 2013

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