



Oregon

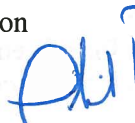
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Water Resources Department

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Phillip C. Ward, Director 

SUBJECT: Agenda Item H, March 6, 2014
Water Resources Commission Meeting

Process Improvement Update

I. Introduction

Staff will update the Commission on the recent activities that have taken place related to process improvement. This is the third process improvement update provided to the Commission since 2010.

II. Discussion

This staff report describes four process improvement efforts undertaken in 2013.

Improving the Production and Use of the Department's Weekly Public Notice

Every Tuesday, the Water Right Services Division publishes a public notice that lists Department water transactions as required by law. The document can include up to 30 different types of transactions and take several hours each week to prepare.

In late 2013, at the request of WRSD, the Information Technology Section of the Technical Services Division began to write web based programs that will greatly simplify the creation of public notices. In addition, plans are underway to make the document more user friendly by adding a filter feature that will allow web-based readers the opportunity to look at the transactions by type or by geography. This project is scheduled for completion in 2014.

Improving Key Performance Measure 10 (Timely Initial Reviews)

The Department reports to the Legislature on 14 Key Performance Measures (KPMs) each fiscal year. KPM #10 directs the Department to report the "percent of water right applications that receive an initial review within 45 days of application filing." The current target set by the Legislature is 55 percent. For the 2012-2013 reporting period, only 20 percent of initial reviews were issued within 45 days. Two years ago the Department reported its best year at 35 percent.

In late 2013, staff from the Water Rights Services Division and Technical Services Division met to map the initial review process and identify opportunities to save time, reduce inefficiencies, and eliminate redundancy. As immediate steps, the group decided to pursue the following:

1. Streamline the groundwater review process, sending case files to the Well Construction – Enforcement Section ONLY if the Groundwater Section staff needs review and input. Applications without well construction issues will not go to the Well Construction Section.
2. Focus significant groundwater staff time on eliminating backlogs on all application types so that staff can get to new applications more quickly.

In addition, improvements planned for 2014 include:

1. Updating the groundwater right application form to ensure the Department gets complete information sooner, particularly with respect to well construction, target aquifer, and well location information.
2. Scan limited license applications and supporting information right away to save time looking for documents.
3. Train and use new staff for preliminary application reviews, which would get checked by a senior hydrogeologist. Although the process may be slow at first, this is a necessary step to build capacity.

Instream Leasing Program

In the 2013 Process Improvement Update to the WRC, staff identified improvements that had been made to the Instream Leasing program. Due to staff turnover in this program area, it was difficult to determine how much efficiency was gained as a result of the process improvements.

During the fall of 2013, the Transfer and Conservation Section took another look at the leasing program and identified another round of process improvements for 2014.

Staff believe that these adjustments and improvements will lead to more efficient processing of these applications in 2014.

Front Counter/Customer Service Operations

During the past two years, staff assisting customers at the Department's "front counter" have been logging their interactions in enterprise software (SharePoint). This data allows us to review what questions are being asked and how frequently, as well as how they are being answered or resolved. Such information facilitates the development of data-driven lists of Frequently Asked Questions, which allows a degree of self-service by customers, while freeing staff time for higher-level work.

SharePoint is also being used to develop a divisional knowledge-base to: 1) accelerate water-law-related research, 2) facilitate self-training of new staff, and 3) improve retention of institutional memory.

III. Summary

The Department has used a variety of tools to generate efficiencies in its water right transaction programs and is committed to continued process improvement efforts.

IV. Alternatives

The Commission may consider the following alternatives:

1. Accept the update, and direct staff to update the Commission once per biennium on recent process improvement efforts.
2. Ask staff to return with more detail.

V. Recommendation

The Director recommends Alternative 1, to direct staff to update the Commission once per biennium on recent process improvement efforts.

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