



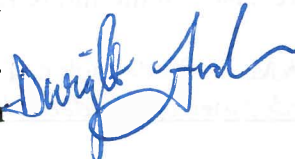
Oregon

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Water Resources Commission

FROM: Dwight French, Administrator
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SUBJECT: Agenda Item E, June 18, 2015
Water Resources Commission Meeting

Process Improvement Update

I. Introduction

Staff will update the Commission on the Department's recent process improvement activities. This is the fourth process improvement update provided to the Commission since 2010.

II. Discussion

This staff report describes four process improvement efforts undertaken since the last report in March of 2014.

1. Improving the Municipal Water Management and Conservation Plan Guidebook

Most municipal and quasi-municipal water suppliers in Oregon must prepare and submit a Water Management and Conservation Plan (WMCP) for Department approval. The plans are generally required as a condition of permit issuance or when an extension of time is approved. A guidebook to assist these water suppliers in preparing a WMCP that meets the Department's requirements was first developed and published in May 2003 in hard copy format.

During the 10-year period immediately following publication of the original guidebook, the Department received approximately 132 municipal WMCPs. Staff's review of these documents revealed several areas of the WMCPs that were consistently in need of improvement.

In early 2013, using the data collected over the years on components of WMCPs that were consistently deficient, Transfer and Conservation Section staff began overhauling and updating the guidebook. Staff received input from the League of Oregon Cities, the Oregon Association of Water Utilities, and the Special Districts Association of Oregon, as well as representatives from the municipal water supplier community, water right consulting firms, and engineers working in the water industry. The updated guidebook was completed in March 2015 and made available online.

The updated guidebook provides better direction and examples for topics not sufficiently addressed in previous WMCPs. The Department expects that this will aid the supplier's preparation of the WMCPs, which should result in more efficient preparation and review of the WMCPs. The guidebook is now maintained and available in digital format only, which will allow for it to be updated more easily in the future and eliminate the need to publish hard copies.

The March 2015 Municipal WMCP Guidebook can be accessed on the Department's webpage at http://www.oregon.gov/owrd/docs/wmcp_guidebook.pdf.

2. Improving the Production of the Department's Weekly Public Notice

During the last process improvement update, the Department reported that a joint project between the Water Right Services Division and the Technical Services Division's Information Technology Section was underway to improve the process for producing 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 statute and rule. The document can include up to 30 different types of transactions and was taking several hours each week to prepare. The transactions were prepared by many different staff members who each had their own methods of collecting the necessary data and sending it, in several different formats, for the notice preparer to mix into one document. After much collaboration, programming, training and testing, this project went "live" in September of 2014. Now, the majority of the inputs are created automatically. The non-automated inputs are prepared in a pre-determined standard format. A weekly process that took a minimum of eight hours to complete now takes between 1.5 and five hours, depending on the complexity of a particular week's notice. Most weeks now take about two hours. Six hours per week saved equals over 300 staff hours per year that can focus on other workload needs.

3. Improving the Quality of Well Inspections

The Technical Services Division and Field Services Division have been working together to improve the quality of well inspections and the data gathered. Well inspection data often includes a variety of technical information that can only be gathered by going to the well site.

In early 2015, regional well inspection staff were brought to Salem for training, which covered topics such as how to effectively interact with licensed drillers on-site, what to look for when observing the installation or abandonment of a well, the types of equipment and materials used, the proper usage of new tools and equipment, and how to best communicate with property owners. This training provided the Department's inspectors with the knowledge to perform better and more complete inspections. It also was an opportunity for Salem staff to explain how well inspection information is used, and why complete and accurate information is important. The training has been especially valuable for new well inspectors that have been hired in response to the increase in drilling activity and new well logs filed.

4. Instream Leasing Program (Update)

During the last process improvement report, the Department updated the Commission on steps taken to improve the processing time for instream leases. These steps have included a redesign of the application forms, having more staff available to review lease applications during the busy portions of the leasing season, improved processing checklists and updated order templates. It was anticipated that these improvements would provide positive results during the 2014 leasing season.

We are happy to report that the steps identified and implemented did in fact result in improved processing times in 2014. Our goal is to process leases within 45 days. We only met this goal five-percent of the time in 2013, but improved to 55 percent last year. In 2013, the average number of days between application filing and final order was 94 days. In 2014, we were able to bring this number down to an average of 51 days, much closer to the goal. We have received several appreciative comments from our repeat applicants acknowledging the improvements.

III. Potential Future Topics

The Department will continue to look for opportunities to improve our processes. Over the next year, staff will work on and update the Commission on progress relating to:

1. Key Performance Measure 10: Timely issuance of Initial Reviews in the water right application process;
2. Creating an electronic payment system for some of the Department's services;
3. Overhauling and updating the Department's website; and
4. Progress on conducting a water right process review.

IV. Summary

The Department has used a variety of tools to generate efficiencies in its programs and is committed to continued process improvement efforts. Another update to the Commission is planned for 2016.

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