



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, MD, Governor

Water Resources Department

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Oregon Launches Its First Integrated Water Resources Strategy

The State of Oregon has launched its first Integrated Water Resources Strategy. Adopted by the Water Resources Commission on August 2, the Strategy provides a blueprint for understanding and meeting Oregon's water quantity, water quality, and ecosystem needs now and into the future. The Strategy and its Executive Summary are now available on-line:

http://cms.oregon.gov/OWRD/pages/law/integrated_water_supply_strategy.aspx.

"This report identifies challenges facing Oregon, from water supply and water quality to ecosystem and habitat," noted Governor Kitzhaber in his support of the Commission's adoption of the Strategy. "It also compiles solutions and actions to address these challenges, and I am committed to working with the Water Resources Department, Water Resources Commission, and our partners to find ways, even in these fiscally challenging times, to implement the recommended actions over time and in a collaborative way."

Using a process that involved extensive public outreach, the Strategy identifies the most critical water-related challenges facing communities throughout Oregon. It offers recommendations in 13 different issue areas to address these challenges. In the short term, the State will pursue those recommendations focused on improved surface water and groundwater data, local water planning, water supply development, instream protections, and funding options to help local communities and state agencies meet their water-related responsibilities. As authorized in ORS 536.220, the Executive Branch will bring policy and funding recommendations in these areas to the 2013 Oregon Legislature for consideration and action.

“Having a blueprint to ensure the state has the right information, trained experts, and stable funding in place to meet our water needs is a crucial step,” noted Commission Chair John Jackson. Together with the Chairs of the Environmental Quality Commission, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, and the Board of Agriculture, Chair Jackson wrote editorials early in the process and met with stakeholder organizations to help identify Oregon’s water-related challenges.

Oregon has taken the unusual step of crafting a plan without waiting for statewide drought, flooding, litigation, or other crisis, unlike many other states. Also unique to Oregon, this Strategy departs from traditional water supply planning in that it incorporates water quantity, water quality, and ecosystem considerations.

Phil Ward, Director of the Water Resources Department, observed that the Strategy brings several benefits to Oregon. “The recommended actions contained in the document were well vetted with our partners and they represent practical, implementable tasks that we can begin today.” He continued, noting that the process itself “established a venue that we will need to utilize as we continue to address Oregon’s water challenges. The Strategy’s listserve, advisory groups, and web-based resources will allow us to stay in touch with Oregonians who care about having a say in the state’s water future.”

Development of the Strategy involved many Oregonians. The Oregon Water Resources Department led the effort, together with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon Department of Agriculture. Oregon’s tribes, public and private sector stakeholders, and state and federal agencies played a prominent role in identifying water-related challenges and solutions. The Directors of the four agencies convened a Project Team of senior staff members and formed three advisory groups to help with various technical and policy components: a Policy Advisory Group comprised of 18 citizen members, an Agency Advisory Group consisting of 18 economic development and natural resource state agencies, and a Federal Liaison Group comprised of ten federal natural resource agencies.

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If you would like more information about Oregon’s first Integrated Water Resources Strategy, or to schedule an interview, please call Brenda Bateman at 503-986-0879 or e-mail waterstrategy@ wrd.state.or.us.