

August 26, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Tom Byler, Executive Director

**SUBJECT: Agenda Item E: 2005-2007 Non-Capital Fund Spending Plan
September 13-14, 2005 OWEB Board Meeting**

E-4. Allocation and Reservation of Non-Capital Funds for Education and Outreach

I. Introduction

This report seeks Board approval to reserve and allocate \$400,000 of non-capital funds to support implementation of OWEB's Education and Outreach Strategy.

II. Background

The Board adopted its Education and Outreach Strategy in May 2005. The purpose of the Strategy is to help the Board and OWEB staff identify priorities and the best way to invest in those priorities. This can be done by direct investment in a project or program or through a targeted education or outreach grant cycle. The Strategy focuses on three key elements: awareness, improve knowledge, and skill development.

The awareness element of the Strategy aims to motivate interest and inform Oregonians about: the significance of watersheds in their everyday lives, the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, OWEB investments in local communities, and the important role watershed groups play in their communities. The improve knowledge element supports more formal, intensive, interactive and educational efforts where there is a specific teaching objective aimed at increasing the level of the audience's knowledge of certain watershed principles. The skills development element is watershed education that helps participants acquire specific technical skills and/or tools to promote individual and/or group actions in ways consistent with the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds.

With limited non-capital funds available at the outset of the biennium, staff recommend a plan to begin implementing the three elements of the Education and Outreach Strategy in a manner that best advances Strategy goals despite insufficient resources.

III. Investment in Awareness

Staff recommend the Board allocate \$150,000 in non-capital funds for OWEB to support an in-house staff person to implement the awareness element of the Education and Outreach Strategy. The Governor's Requested Budget for 2005-2007 sought a position for this purpose, but the

position was ultimately not funded in OWEB's final budget. Nevertheless, the need remains for this position to cover a significant portion of the Education and Outreach Strategy. This position would cover the following tasks identified in the Strategy:

- (1) Prepare media release and outreach materials with OWEB grantees that promote local restoration efforts and partnerships;
- (2) Develop media contacts statewide for use by OWEB and with local watershed groups;
- (3) Prepare media releases on Board actions for statewide and local distribution;
- (4) Act as OWEB Liaison to the Oregon Plan Outreach Team, including developing and delivering coordinated Oregon Plan outreach messages and training materials for local watershed groups to conduct their own outreach;
- (5) Manage the OWEB website, including enhancement and maintenance of the site, making tools and resources more available for watershed groups, and highlighting OWEB investments; and
- (6) Assist local watershed groups with outreach.

These tasks cover local and statewide awareness needs and will help the public better understand the benefits and opportunities of OWEB investment of public funds in watershed health.

Currently, OWEB does not have the capacity to support communications about its local investments or the public-private partnerships carried out under the Oregon Plan. Staff recognize funds are desirable to support communication needs at all levels and by all OWEB partners. However, with limited non-capital funds, staff suggest the most cost-effective investment in awareness is to support an in-house staff dedicated fully to the purposes listed above. If the Board approves this request, staff will seek administrative approval for a limited duration position for the remainder of the 2005-2007 biennium.

IV. Investments in Improving Knowledge

Staff recommend reserving \$200,000 in non-capital funds for a grant solicitation in October 2005 to fund education projects that are designed to improve local knowledge of watershed processes and restoration benefits. This would focus OWEB's investments on the type of education efforts that are most effective at the local level and that can be best tailored to local issues and needs.

The Board should also set a maximum grant award amount for the October 2005 grant cycle of \$20,000. This would enable grant funds to be available to more groups around the state. The reality of placing a ceiling on grant awards is that some local projects will either need to scale down the amount of the education delivered or the length of time a program is supported. The latter could affect K-12 programs the most by making it more difficult to fund a full year's implementation of a watershed education program. The latter problem could be addressed by running an education grant cycle in April 2006, or by creating a new timeframe for the submission of education grants.

OWEB has developed and supported efforts of other organizations to deliver education and outreach programs to reach identified needs across the state. For example, OWEB has funded both the basic program and specialized efforts of the Watershed Stewardship Education Program through OSU Extension. OWEB has also supported capacity building, training and education for statewide organizations of watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts. At this time, we have not discussed ongoing needs with those organizations, nor whether they have been

planning to submit an application this fall. Before finalizing a staff recommendation on this matter, those groups should be engaged in a discussion about how to continue support while staying within the agency's current resource means.

V. Investments in Skill Development

Staff recommend the Board authorize the allocation of \$50,000 in non-capital funds to invest in efforts to provide local groups and individuals with specific skills and tools that lead to actions that further the goals of the Oregon Plan. Opportunities such as workshops on river processes and restoration actions proposed by OSU can be better taken advantage of by local partners and others if OWEB provides "scholarships" with these funds. Workshops on grant application development and management could also offer useful tools for local partners. Under this proposal, staff would distribute funds to appropriate workshops and training as opportunities arise. Staff will periodically report to the Board on the use of these funds.

VI. Recommendation

- A. Staff recommend the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$150,000 in non-capital funds for OWEB to support an in-house staff person to implement the awareness element of the Education and Outreach Strategy.
- B. Staff recommend the Board reserve \$200,000 in non-capital funds for a targeted grant offering in October 2005 for projects that address improved knowledge.
- C. Staff request the Board authorize an allocation of up to \$50,000 in non-capital funds to support local partner participation in skill development workshop opportunities.