



Oregon

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Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Greg Sieglitz, Monitoring and Reporting Program Manager
Renee Davis-Born, Data Analyst and Information Specialist

**SUBJECT: Agenda Item M: Monitoring and Research Program
January 21-22, 2009 OWEB Board Meeting**

I. Introduction

This report updates the Board on the ongoing activities of the Monitoring and Research Program. The report is for informational purposes only.

II. Background

Monitoring section staff have focused on a number of program areas since the last Board meeting. The Board spending plan includes a \$1.3 million reserve for the regular monitoring grant solicitation. In this pending grant cycle, OWEB received a total of \$2.7 million in monitoring grant requests. Monitoring staff led the review of these applications by the Oregon Plan Monitoring Team (OPMT). The OPMT reviews will inform the Regional Review Team evaluations of applications.

Staff are also in the midst of selecting a contractor to perform the riparian and fish passage evaluations for the South Coast and Grande Ronde basins. The Board approved \$100,000 for this purpose in September 2008. This review will look at the effectiveness of these project types in the two basins that have seen the longest period of restoration investment.

The following section provides details on several monitoring program activities: 1) the Coastal Storm Assessment Report; 2) the Research Priorities and Solicitation Process; and 3) Wetland Effectiveness Monitoring.

III. Discussion

A. Coastal Storm Assessment Report

At the January 2008 Board meeting in Astoria, staff provided Board members with its initial impressions about how OWEB investments fared in the December 2007 storm in the North Coast Basin. At that time, preliminary reports indicated that culvert and bridge replacements appeared to have survived the storm and that no reports had come in about large wood being lost or causing damage downstream. Staff already had received reports of new log and gravel recruitment and newly braided channels. Channel reconstruction projects also

appeared to have fared well. At the same time, some riparian fencing and planting damage had been found on the Upper Nehalem River.

Staff suggested the potential use of effectiveness monitoring funds to do follow-up research on the effect of storm events on restoration projects and how the findings from such a study could inform OWEB's grant making activities and guidelines for implementation of restoration projects. The Board agreed with this approach.

In the summer of 2008, OWEB contracted with the Institute for Natural Resources (INR) at Oregon State University to coordinate and lead the OWEB Coastal Storm Assessment project. The purpose of this project was to evaluate past and current restoration practices and their relative survival during the significant wind-and-rain storm event of December 2007. A second objective was to assess how the guidelines used to inform the implementation of these projects may be affected by potential changes in storm events due to global warming.

Staff expect the final report to be available by the time of the upcoming Board meeting. Staff will provide copies of the full report and summarize its findings at that time.

B. Research Priorities and Research Solicitation Processes

OWEB offered its first open solicitation for research grants in 2007 and awarded funding to nine projects last September. During 2008, the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee met to develop priority focus areas for the anticipated 2009 research grant cycle. A proposed approach to developing specific research priorities was presented to and adopted by the Board at the September 2008 meeting. Staff then began working on revising the research priorities and establishing a process for soliciting research proposals in the spring of 2009.

In light of potential revenue reductions and budget constraints, staff propose a slight shift of course in this program area. Instead of developing a broad list of updated research priorities to inform an open solicitation for research grant proposals, staff recommend convening the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee to discuss a more narrow set of research priorities that could focus on applied research products such as: climate change and local watershed impacts; climate change and salmon returns from the ocean environment; economic evaluations of the role OWEB investments play in local economies and communities; modeling water availability; and terrestrial considerations of invasive species and wildfires.

Staff will reconvene the Monitoring and Research Subcommittee on this issue and report back to the full Board this spring.

C. Agency Investments in the Wetland Effectiveness Monitoring Program

As reported in the Director's update Agenda Item D7, OWEB secured a \$342,281 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to create the framework for an Oregon Wetland Monitoring and Assessment Program in the Willamette Valley. Staff have made significant progress on this since September.

The EPA funded project is intended as an initial step toward a comprehensive wetlands strategy by applying the Oregon Rapid Wetland Assessment Protocol (ORWAP) to develop detailed effectiveness monitoring to assess wetland quality and evaluate restoration and mitigation success. The project also will test a preliminary invertebrate-based biological

monitoring tool, improve the quality and management of data on mitigation and restoration sites, and increase the exchange of information to improve decision-making about wetland enhancement and investments. This project is intended to complement and inform investments that will be made by OWEB under the Willamette Special Investment Partnership. The work under this grant commenced last fall and field work is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2009.

Following the Board's approval of the delegation of authority for the Director to enter into grant agreements and contracts, staff conducted a Request for Proposals and selected a wetland contractor to conduct the field work during the next two field seasons. While the EPA grant provided \$63,000 for the field work, there are additional parameters that could be monitored including sensitive wildlife species featured in the Oregon Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy that would add significant value and understanding to the overall wetland evaluation project. Staff may come before the Board in March with a request to allocate \$30,000 for this purpose. The funds would come from the existing \$375,000 reserve for effectiveness monitoring. These additional funds would supplement the federal grant dollars and enable an extension of the field work contract that is being finalized this month.

IV. Recommendation

This is an informational item only. No action is requested at this time.