



Oregon

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January 4, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Tom Byler, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Agenda Item E: Strategic Plan
January 20-21, 2010 OWEB Board Meeting

I. Introduction

This report seeks Board approval of a final Strategic Plan, which has been revised based on a public comment process conducted in the fall of 2009.

II. Background

At the March 2009 meeting, the Board decided to initiate a strategic planning exercise involving Board members, staff, and stakeholders. The goal was to identify, discuss, and determine OWEB program priorities and actions to focus on between 2009 and 2014. Don Harker was hired in May to facilitate the strategic planning process, interview staff and stakeholders, and help write the plan.

The Board met with management staff for facilitated planning sessions in Eugene on June 1, 2009, and in Silverton on June 30 and July 1, 2009. Drafts were then circulated among Board members and staff during the month of August. The Board Planning Subcommittee met on August 27, 2009, to discuss a draft to be presented to the full Board at the September meeting. At the September 2009 meeting at Wallowa Lake, the Board made minor edits, approved a final draft of the strategic plan, and directed staff to make the draft available for public review in October.

III. Public Comment and Plan Revision Process

Staff distributed the final draft Strategic Plan by email and on the OWEB's web site in early October. A message from the Executive Director was made available with the draft inviting comment on the plan by Friday, November 6, 2009. The message specifically requested feedback on the following questions:

1. Do the Mission Statement and Vision Statement capture the spirit of what you do and what is possible by the use of the funding from OWEB?
2. Do the Goals and Strategies link effectively to the Mission and Vision?
3. Are there issues of concern that you do not see addressed in the Final Draft Strategic Plan?

Staff discussed the draft plan at meetings of key stakeholders, including the Gathering of the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils in Klamath Falls in late October, and the annual convention of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) in the first week of November.

By November 6, 2009, OWEB received ten comments on the Strategic Plan goals, strategies, and actions. Based on the comments received, Don Harker, the Board co-chairs, and staff developed a proposed draft for the Board Planning Subcommittee to consider on December 8, 2009. The Subcommittee suggested additional minor edits.

Attachment A is a summary of the public comments received with OWEB's response to the comments and a description of whether changes have been proposed by staff, the co-chairs, and Planning Subcommittee. Attachment B shows the proposed edits to the Strategic Plan in tracked changes. Finally, Attachment C contains a clean version of the proposed final plan.

IV. Final Strategic Plan Draft

Many of the public comments proposed to the Strategic Plan provide clarity to the goals, strategies, and actions discussed by the Board in the strategic planning process. Over all, the comments help to strengthen the final plan. There are a handful of substantive changes proposed or policy issues raised by the public comment process that staff and the Subcommittee wish to highlight.

A. Watershed and Habitat Restoration and Conservation

Bruce Taylor, with Defenders of Wildlife, proposed adding "habitat" before the term conservation in Goal 2 as a way to more "explicitly reflect OWEB's movement away from its perceived traditional focus on salmon and water quality...(and) to make it clear that habitat conservation, for wildlife as well as for fish, will be a central focus for OWEB's investment program." This suggested edit raised the issue of how OWEB describes it work consistently throughout the Strategic Plan document. Staff have proposed changes to the Plan throughout the document to use the phrase "watershed and habitat restoration and conservation" as way to consistently and more comprehensively describe OWEB's efforts related to fish and wildlife habitat, clean water, and watershed functions and processes.

B. Land Trust and Local Infrastructure

Bruce Taylor, with Defenders of Wildlife, also proposed that the plan be more explicit about the role of land conservation and suggested including land trusts in the supporting language and actions under Goal 2 for the purposes of setting the "stage for a more thorough consideration of the role of land conservation in OWEB's future investment strategies." The proposed draft Plan adds land trusts to the list of local partners engaged in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation and that should be at the table to discuss ways to build and support a diverse and enduring local infrastructure (Goal 2, Strategy 1, Action 1). Staff are not proposing changes that commit the Board to supporting land trust capacity in ways similar to how OWEB supports the operational capacity of watershed councils or soil and water conservation districts. OWEB's expectations for and relationship to local land trusts is a policy area worthy of more focused discussion. Staff recommend the Board direct staff to develop a process for the Board to begin a dialogue about this issue over the next 18 months.

C. Long-Term Stewardship

The Long-Tom Watershed Council suggested that the concept of long-term stewardship be added to Goal 2. OWEB supports the general concept of supporting local infrastructure that encourages and sustains long-term stewardship by landowners of OWEB's restoration and protection investments across the state. However, OWEB rules prohibit funding for "routine project maintenance" [OAR 695-010-0040(4)], and long-term stewardship of land acquisition projects [OAR 695-045-0030]. If the Board is interested in further discussion of this issue, staff will incorporate this into the agency's periodic administrative rule review process. At this time, staff do not recommend starting this process until there is greater certainty about constitutional and legislative changes that may also impact OWEB's rules.

D. Public Awareness and Involvement

A number of comments suggested that Goal 3 was too focused on the public awareness side of OWEB's education and outreach mandate and recommended goal, strategy, and action item language changes or additions to include more involvement elements. The recommended revisions in Goal 3, group the public awareness actions into Strategy 1 and the public involvement actions into Strategy 2.

V. Recommendation

Staff recommend the Board approve the final draft Strategic Plan contained in Attachment C to this staff report.

Attachments

- A. Summary of Public Comments
- B. December 2009 proposed Final Strategic Plan (tracked changes)
- C. December 2009 proposed Final Strategic Plan (clean)

OWEB Strategic Plan 2009

Summary of Public Comments

Context and Document Organization

OWEB received comments from ten individuals or organizations on the final draft Strategic Plan. This document compiles those comments and identifies those that have been incorporated into the final proposed Strategic Plan. The comment language, including italic, strikeout, and underlined formatting, have been inserted into this document as submitted to OWEB. The full versions of the comments are posted with the staff reports on OWEB's web site at:

http://www.oregon.gov/OWEB/BoardMtgs/boardmtg_SR_jan10.shtml.

The comments have been divided into two major sections 1) Strategic Plan Comments and 2) Implementation and Process Comments. In section one the comments are organized by the sections in the draft strategic plan. The page reference in the section headings refers to the version of the plan contained in Agenda Item E, Attachment C.

OWEB's response and any proposed changes to the strategic plan are identified either after each comment or after a related group of comments. Some comments that were editing type comments (addition of a clarifying word or sentence) were made directly in the strategic plan and are not identified in this summary.

The following individuals and organizations commented on the OWEB Strategic Plan:

- Bob Zybach
- Bruce Taylor, Defenders of Wildlife
- Cyndi Karp
- Jeffrey Kee
- Long Tom Watershed Council
- MidCoast Watersheds Council
- Oregon Cattlemen's Association
- Oregon Invasive Species Council
- Thomas Stahl, Oregon Department of Wildlife
- Tom Marlin

OWEB's Comment Review Approach

OWEB has worked to keep the strategic plan short and readable. For this reason, some comments to add information that is readily available on the website or in other publications have not been included in this document. This includes updates, progress reports and general descriptions of OWEB.

OWEB chose an approach to strategic planning that started with driving forces affecting the organization and watersheds. The process was deliberately abbreviated and left a lot of work for the implementation plan, including identifying measures.

Section One: Strategic Plan Comments

Message from Executive Director and Board (page 2)

Comment One – Oregon Invasive Species Council

The message from the Executive Director and Board could be greatly strengthened. For example, one paragraph notes “No matter where you live in Oregon, you’re in a watershed.” This statement could have a great deal more meaning and empower people to think about the role they can play in contributing to healthy watersheds by stating, “No matter where you live in Oregon, your actions affect a watershed.”

The message notes that the plan represents the “best thoughts” of the Board and staff. Should it instead reflect the highest priority actions to protect and conserve Oregon’s watersheds based on a statewide analysis of watershed-based management, activities, and funding, and the unique role OWEB can play to fill gaps not currently filled by other entities?

OWEB has been in existence for quite some time. The message should reflect some clear and specific accomplishments during the first 10 years. An entire section of the plan (1-2 pages) could be devoted to helping people understand what OWEB has achieved.

Recommendation: Consider strengthening the “No matter where you live in Oregon, you’re in a watershed” statement, consider characterizing the actions of the plan as highest priority strategies versus “best thoughts,” and provide a summary of OWEB’s key accomplishments in the first 10 years.

OWEB Response (Message Comment)

Language was added to this section of the plan to address the concerns above. In order to keep this document short and directly related to strategic goals, strategies and actions OWEB decided to not include information easily obtained on the OWEB website or in existing OWEB documents. Likewise, a full history and accomplishments would take considerable room so is left for readers to seek out on the web or in the many publications regarding OWEB work and progress. See the revised plan for changes.

Oregon’s Conservation Legacy (page 3)

Comment One – MidCoast Watersheds Council

We think the introductory passage about Oregon’s Conservation Legacy is incomplete. In particular, it should not shy away from describing the metaphor of a three-legged stool, and the development of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds as the critical third leg of that stool, complementing the existing two legs. This passage should also reference the critical contribution to the legacy from the other “two” legs:

- Agencies continuing to adapt their processes to help implement the plan, working to incorporate new information as it becomes available (e.g. policies that reflect the importance of beavers) and
- The importance of effective enforcement of existing rules (e.g. leveling the playing field so good “actors” are not at a competitive disadvantage and so that existing work, e.g. to protect wetlands is not undermined by their continued loss by rule violators).

OWEB Response (Conservation Legacy Comment)

The comments, while valid, represent a partial list of factors that could be identified as important. OWEB’s point is that Oregonians have a clear conservation legacy and has included examples to support that point, not provide a full accounting of that legacy. OWEB does agree the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds is an important example of that legacy. However, because the Oregon Plan is not as well known to the public as the Bottle Bill and other examples, it has not been specifically identified.

Mission Statement (page 4)

Comment One – Oregon Invasive Species Council

Recommendation: It may be more technically accurate for the mission statement to read, *To help protect and restore watersheds and their associated native fish and wildlife habitats and sources of high quality water, services provided by healthy watersheds that contribute to thriving communities and strong economies.*” This suggested revision does three things: (1) it ties the natural habitat statement to watersheds, which is the statutory responsibility of OWEB; (2) it helps to more clearly define “natural,” an often misunderstood statement; and (3) it places an emphasis on native fish and wildlife habitat as a key desired outcome in a healthy watershed.

Comment Two – Oregon Cattlemen’s Association

We recommend that the Mission Statement and Vision Statement continue to adhere to the importance of supporting “local communities and economies,” and that those involved in administering OWEB grants and projects never lose sight of their importance to the program.

OWEB Response (Mission Statement Comments)

No changes based on these comments. The mission statement has been around for many years and OWEB desires to keep it succinct. OWEB believes the words “natural habitats” is short and understandable and includes “native fish and wildlife habitats and sources of high water quality”. OWEB is updating its website information, and will make sure to include language and examples of supporting native fish and wildlife and sources of “high water quality” as part of the work we do.

Vision Statement (page 4)

Comments included several language recommendations for the vision statement and the explanatory information that follows the statement including the bulleted requirements list.

Comment One – MidCoast Watersheds Council

This statement frames your whole document and could use additional work to clarify your intent. Is the intention to be a leader, or to be recognized as a leader? Unfortunately it is possible to be the latter without being the former, which we think is not really OWEB's intention. Is the goal public support for its operations or public support for the difference OWEB's efforts make on the ground in the communities? It's also important that the vision doesn't imply that support for local economies is direct, but comes indirectly from having healthy resources. This point may be better made elsewhere (as it isn't what OWEB directly does or measures).

Proposed alternate wording: OWEB provides continuing strong leadership and funding that leads to effective community-based conservation of Oregon's natural resources.

Comment Two – Long Tom Watershed Council

We strongly disagree that the vision statement would not only mention OWEB by name, but have its recognition and support as the central focus. If worded this way, it may be a vision that only OWEB and friends of OWEB can get behind, instead of a broad generous vision that every Oregonian can't argue with.

The focus instead should be for healthy watersheds throughout Oregon with strong public support for significant public investment in managing healthy river and upland systems with local community engagement, support, and direct relationships with vibrant local economies.

Comment Three – Oregon Cattlemen's Association

The Cattlemen's Association will be supportive of science based decision involving public and private stakeholders in partnerships that have the ability to identify necessary projects to help maintain, repair, protect, restore, and when needed, improve our natural water systems in Oregon. We are concerned with the possible broadening effect of the Vision Statement in the draft plan. The over-reaching effect could include "agency building" for OWEB by moving the project lists further away from the immediate streams needing attention to the "upland landscapes capable of sustaining and enriching Oregon's biological diversity, ecosystems..."

Comment Four – Defenders of Wildlife

OWEB ~~is recognized as a leader~~ plays a leading role in the conservation of Oregon's vast natural resources and enjoys strong public support for its contributions to community-based conservation and local economies.

The vision calls for ~~Oregon's watersheds to include healthy river systems and well managed upland~~ healthy landscapes across Oregon capable of sustaining and enriching ~~Oregon's the~~

state's biological diversity, ecosystems, fish and wildlife habitat, and agricultural, forest and human communities.

Comment Five – MidCoast Watersheds Council

The requirements of the vision are good, but incomplete (though these points are captured in your strategies and actions). It seems essential to set out as the big picture here (and then to assure they are also captured in the Goals and actions below.) We therefore propose adding a new first bullet, and expanding on the “ridgetop to ridgetop” bullet (both underlined below):

OWEB's vision will guide future decisions about programs and funding priorities. This vision requires:

- A continuing commitment to utilizing the best available science to steer its priorities, projects, and assessments.
- A ridgetop to ridgetop approach to achieving healthy watersheds, with emphasis on maintaining and expanding functioning systems to maintain resiliency in light of climate change, population growth and other ecological stressors;

OWEB Response (Vision Statement Comments)

Visions were initially crafted for both the organization and the landscape. The board chose to proceed with a vision of the organization since they must be concerned with how the organization performs. The vision for the watersheds is embodied in the bulleted list of requirements and strategies and the words “watershed health” have been added to the vision statement.

The vision may appear to be an expansion of OWEB's current mandate but scientists agree that the watershed is a system and whole watersheds must be considered, ridgetop to ridgetop and headwaters to confluence. The articulation of this comprehensive coverage of a watershed is consistent with the agency's authority and responsibilities.

The vision statement is changed to read as follows: “OWEB is a leader in the conservation of Oregon's natural resources and enjoys strong public support for its contributions to community-based conservation, watershed health and local economies.”

The narrative is changed to read: “The vision calls for healthy landscapes across Oregon capable of sustaining and enriching the state's biological diversity, ecosystems, fish and wildlife habitat, and agricultural, forest and human communities.”

Language was also added to include the phrase “ridgetop to ridgetop and headwaters to confluence”. The modification of the first additional bullet under comment five is accepted. The language proposed in the second bullet is covered under various strategies in the plan. Other bullets were edited.

The complete bulleted list now reads: “OWEB's vision will guide future decisions about programs and funding priorities. This vision requires:

- *Integrated investments in projects that emphasize protection and/or restoration of watershed processes and ecosystem functions required by Oregon’s native fish and wildlife;*
- *A ridgetop to ridgetop and headwaters to confluence approach to achieving healthy watersheds;*
- *Dynamic river and floodplain systems that interact with physical and ecological processes;*
- *Water quality that supports Oregon’s native fish and wildlife species and meets human needs;*
- *Involved community members including both public and private interests that build and sustain a watershed stewardship ethic;*
- *Use of science and experience to guide priorities, projects and assessments.*
- *Monitoring to support adaptive management and effective investments.”*

Goals and Strategies

General comments are covered first then specific comments relevant to each goal and strategy and then actions are covered separately.

General Goal and Strategy Comments

Comment One – various commenters

There are not performance metrics. (Oregon Invasive Species Council)
My concern is that “plans” need measurable objectives. (Bob Zybach)

OWEB Response (General Goal - Comment One)

Measures were not added to the strategic plan. OWEB recognizes that progress must be measured. OWEB currently has a number of mandated performance measures they must report on and will be examining these for alignment with the final strategic plan. Additional measures may be created as part of that ongoing process.

Comment Two – Bob Zybach

The goals are full of political and meaningless statements. The “goal” of the original GWEB was to “restore” fish runs. Fish can be counted. The runs have apparently increased since then; whether through changed ocean conditions, altered fishing quotas, OWEB activities, or some combination thereof is not known. OWEB is now openly fishing for a rationale to continue its existence. The bait looks a lot more like artificial plastic than actual substance. This document is almost entirely politics, full of meaningless phrases, “outreach” and consensus building. It is the design for a bureaucracy with an unlimited budgetary need, a perpetually unfinished “mission,” and no possible way to be held accountable.

OWEB Response (General Goal - Comment Two)

No changes to the plan resulted from these comments. OWEB’s strategic look at its work is a genuine attempt to be relevant and contribute to the essential work of managing and restoring Oregon’s watersheds. Some language is general and requires additional definition which is

accomplished through strategies and actions. Specific work plans for OWEB staff will further specify the details of how the language translates into work on the ground. OWEB believes it is important to continue to address how to protect and enhance watershed health in the face of ongoing challenges such as population growth, land use changes, and climate change.

Comment Three – Jeffrey Kee

I would suggest adding a couple of more goals.

Goal 6 – OWEB will work to support increased water availability through natural storage and consumptive water conservation strategies in all watersheds.

Goal 7-OWEB will work to become the regional, national and international model and example of effective utilization of public and private investments to restore and sustain natural functions to watersheds.

OWEB Response (General Goal – Comment Three)

No specific changes were made to the plan based on this comment; however other specific comments on the plan did lead to goal and strategy language changes (see revised plan) which may have increased alignment with the intent of these statements. These proposed goal statements are closer to strategy statements. OWEB believes that the spirit and intent of these two suggested goals is embodied in the Vision and strategies under Goal 1.

Comment Four – Cyndi Karp

First and foremost is Education and Research. I would like to add a Goal 6 to Page 5. Education and Research. There is not enough emphasis put into OWEB's Strategic Plan that Stresses the Importance of Education and Research. A separate goal for Education and Research would be appropriate.

To accomplish all the Strategic Conservation Goals of the State of Oregon, all aspects of Education should be considered as solutions to current and future issues. Only through the Education of Humans are we able to meet National goals for all watershed's.

Everything that happens in a watershed effects the whole. What my neighbors put into their drains or on their lands affects the whole watershed and everything that lives in the watershed. What humans put down their drains upstream is what the downstream occupants drink. The EPA is well on the way of proving that humans are poisoning ourselves with our own waste. There have been National News reports about Pharmaceuticals in our drinking water.

What are pharmaceuticals doing to the watershed? What are pesticides/herbicides doing to the watershed? What are the chemical that we clean our homes, offices and cars doing to the watershed? How much damage have the Transportation systems of Oregon affected the watershed? I have lists of thousands of what is happening to the Watershed questions. The answer to all of these question is received from education. Good Scientific Research and Education. I believe that every OWEB grant should have some connection with education or research. What are we going to learn or do to help education should be written into every

grant, somehow. There are many ways to do that. Many of the grants that I have read have education and research already written into the grant. I would like to see the support of education and research in every grant. One of these grant projects could be based in Education and Research with all K-12 School Districts in the State of Oregon. This would be unprecedented, but an Basic K-12 Education Goal could be amazing. All Oregon School children being Educated about Watershed's. The General Public is in need of Education about watershed's. There are Public Education funds directly set aside for Gambling Addiction. Why not funds set aside for Watershed Education and Research. Goal 6 - Education and Research would support Goals 1 through 5. Please Support Education and Research in all of Oregon Watershed's. Education and Research will help guide Oregon's and maybe the World's path to Watershed Recovery.

OWEB Response (General Goal - Comment Four)

OWEB agrees with the commenter's points that education is important for public understanding of the threats to watershed health and what people and organizations can do to protect and improve clean water, wildlife habitat and watersheds. We believe that the strategies and actions under Goal 1, Strategy 2 and Goal 3 address issues about research and education expressed in these comments.

Goal 1 and Strategy Comments (pages 5-8)

Comment One – MidCoast Watersheds Council

A focus on “watershed and ecosystem functions and processes” is like mom and apple pie: everybody supports this. However, over the past 10 years we have seen much disagreement about which restoration actions actually do this, versus “just treating symptoms.”

In the second paragraph of the Where are we now? explanation, the list of 5 bullets appears to be a list presented by a consultant to OWEB several years ago as a priority list with the first bullet (connectivity) being highest priority, and the fifth (addressing symptoms) being lowest priority. Presenting this list now as a set of equal-priority “types of activities have been identified to address watershed function improvement” is not appropriate. The fifth – addressing symptoms – was explicitly described as lowest priority, and probably should stay low-priority. The point is, treating symptoms does not by itself “address watershed function improvement.” But in fact, the restoration projects you fund tend to do both, and it is often hard to categorize particular projects as primarily doing one or the other.

Happily, the list of 6 Actions following this strategy point to a solution. These actions are more about addressing Limiting Factors than about restoring functions and processes, and a Strategy based more on Limiting Factors would fit better with these 6 Actions. Accordingly, we recommend rewriting the Strategy 1 language to capture that point.

Proposed language: Strategy 1: Maintain and enhance restoration and protection programs that address factors limiting natural watershed and ecosystem functions and processes, support sustainable working landscapes, and empower community-based conservation to address economic, social and environmental health.

Comment Two – Defenders of Wildlife

Goal 1: Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through program and project investments that ~~incorporate~~ enhance watershed and ecosystem functions and processes ~~and~~ in ways that address community needs.

OWEB Response (Goal 1 Comments)

Goal 1 is changed to read: “Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through program and project investments that enhance watershed and ecosystem functions and processes and support community needs.” OWEB is satisfied with the existing language in Strategy 1 and recommends no changes.

Goal 2 and Strategy Comments (pages 8-10)

Comment One – Defenders of Wildlife

Goal 2: Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed restoration and habitat conservation.

Watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts and other nongovernmental organizations are key partners in implementing OWEB’s habitat conservation and watershed enhancement program. Councils and districts account for roughly two-thirds of OWEB grants. They play a critical role in working with interested landowners to design projects, apply for grants, implement restoration projects, monitor project results, and provide local watershed education. Land trusts and other partners play a key role in delivering the land conservation element of the state’s conservation strategies, which help ensure that the benefits of the state’s conservation investments are sustained over time. The work of all these ~~local~~ partners also provides significant community and economic benefits. Success of OWEB’s mission and vision requires these partners to have sufficient capacity and funding to continue and enhance their work. In addition, watershed restoration and protection needs are so great, that more partners at the local level are needed.

Comment Two – Long Tom Watershed Council

Goal 2: Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed restoration, conservation, and long-term stewardship.

OWEB Response (Goal 2 – Comments One and Two)

The suggestion to add the words “long-term stewardship” is not included. Staff believe the board needs to have considerable conversation about this idea. Support of specific groups may be one way for assuring long-term stewardship, but the resilience of OWEB funded restoration is also part of ensuring the long-term benefits. It should be noted that the phrase “watershed and habitat restoration and conservation” is new and now used throughout the strategic plan where appropriate.

Goal 2 is revised to read: “Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.”

The suggested changes to the narrative, with modification, are accepted. Land trusts are included in language under Strategy 1 and Action 1 (see strategic plan changes). This is recognition that they are important part of the local infrastructure. OWEB’s statutes and rules call out OWEB’s role to provide capacity support for watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts, but not land trusts. As such, land trusts are not being considered for regular ongoing support grants.

The narrative is revised to read: “Watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts, and other nongovernmental organizations are key partners in implementing OWEB’s watershed and habitat restoration and conservation program. Councils and districts account for roughly two-thirds of OWEB grants. They play a critical role in working with interested landowners to design projects, apply for grants, implement restoration projects, monitor project results, and provide local watershed education. Land trusts work with willing landowners to protect lands with important ecological or habitat values. The work of all these partners also provides significant community and economic benefits. Success of OWEB’s mission and vision requires these partners to have sufficient capacity and funding to continue and enhance their work. In addition, watershed restoration and protection needs are so great, that more partners at the local level are needed.”

Comment Three – MidCoast Watersheds Council

Goal 2, Strategy 1. Establish and articulate policies related to the support and development of a diverse local infrastructure for watershed restoration.

Strategy 2: Evaluate and adjust watershed council support grant review and funding processes to build local capacity, provide base funding and promote strategic partnerships.

We cannot argue with these proposed actions, but we had hopes that this Strategic Plan would have gone farther in addressing the issues of infrastructure support and the grant review and funding processes. We have known for a while that these actions are necessary, and just promising (again) to take them is not a lot of progress. Missing from Strategy 2 is the commitment to evaluate the effectiveness of the work being done by watershed councils and to prioritize and award funding based on effectiveness.

OWEB Response (Goal 2 – Comment Three)

No changes to the strategic plan were made. OWEB acknowledges that issues related to policies for council funding and local infrastructure development have been ongoing. The actions identified for the two strategies articulate specific ways to make progress on these issues. Strategy 2, Action 3 will specifically address council funding.

Goal 3 and Strategy Comments (pages 10-11)

Comment One – Long Tom Watershed Council

Goal 3. When working with a conservation focus, we frequently run into moments of strategic panic that we can’t “save enough”. A key component of the long-term strategy that

we're all counting on is that our work will include restoration, conservation, *and* demonstrating methods for long-term stewardship.

Comment Two – MidCoast Watersheds Council

We appreciate the language in Goal 3 regarding the importance of public information to increasing understanding and we read it to say that OWEB will provide information that will help people know how to effectively engage in action. We support this goal and the text that goes with it, but think the strategies need work, particularly to emphasize the importance of information that influences individual actions and attitudes and information that fosters a deeper understanding of process and function of watersheds and ecological interdependence as a whole. Furthermore, Actions need to be added that help Oregonians engage in activities that support healthy watersheds (the second part of Goal 3).

Strategy 1 reads: Engage Oregonians on a broad level, reminding them of the importance of healthy watersheds and informing them, in broad strokes, of what has been accomplished on their behalf through the work of OWEB and others.

The main goal of Strategy 1 and the text that follows seems to reference a publicity campaign to promote OWEB and its work rather than to promote effective education programs through its investments that engage more people in effective work and support that work.

Perhaps the compiling of the investments and outcomes needs to be a separate strategy than one that promotes effective education programs and helps support effective education by local partner investments.

Proposed language:

Strategy 1. Help build and support effective outreach and education by local partners.

Strategy 2. Help promote awareness of the ecological outcomes of OWEB investments.

Comment Three – Oregon Invasive Species Council

The strategies and action items for Goal 3 related to outreach and education initiatives could be strengthened by promoting actions that truly engage Oregonians regarding activities they can do to support healthy watersheds. What does “on a broad level” in strategy 1 mean? This strategy is very OWEB-focused versus achieving the goal of “providing information to Oregonians to help Oregonians understand the need for and engage in activities that support healthy watersheds.” Strategy 2 relates to OWEB accomplishments, as well. Perhaps this goal could be split into 2 separate goals – one to increase awareness of OWEB and its accomplishments, and the other to engage Oregonians in actions that enhance watershed protection and restoration.

Recommendation: If support for OWEB is a desired outcome, perhaps there should be 2 outreach-related goals; one to increase awareness and support for OWEB and the other to engage Oregonians in actions that enhance watershed protection and restoration. The action items for these two goals are different.

OWEB Response (Goal 3 – Comments One-Three)

The language of Strategies 1 and 2 is modified to read: “Strategy 1: Make Oregonians aware of the importance of healthy watersheds and informing them, in broad strokes, of what has been accomplished on their behalf through the work of OWEB and others. Strategy 2: Encourage and facilitate greater exploration and knowledge for those Oregonians who seek greater involvement in watershed restoration and conservation.”

Comment Four – Bob Zybach

Goal 3: Would have been good to stop after “providing information to Oregonians.” Maybe if we had more information, we wouldn’t see a “need.” And what the heck is a “healthy” watershed, and why could it possible need my “support?” These are political calls for consensus and action, needing a community organizer, not a scientist or a results-oriented worker.

OWEB Response (Goal 3 – Comment Four)

OWEB is carrying out a public mandate to protect and restore watersheds. OWEB believes that partnering, consensus building and education are all needed to make our program investments successful. This in no way reduces the essential need for scientists and knowledgeable land owners and restoration practitioners. There is considerable scientific evidence that watersheds have been negatively impacted by humans and that human activity can positively impact watersheds.

Goal 4 and Strategy Comments (page 11-12)

Comment One – Defenders of Wildlife

Goal 4: Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and private landowners for habitat conservation and watershed health.

OWEB Response (Goal 4 – Comment One)

OWEB has added the language “watershed and habitat restoration and conservation” as a standard phrase throughout the strategic plan at appropriate places. The language for Goal 4 is changed to read: “Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and private landowners for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.”

Comment Two – Bob Zybach

Goal 4: Would have been good to stop after “build strong partnerships.” The phrase “for watershed health” sounds like a lot of meaningless meetings and memos and workshops just trying to figure out what “health” means. One more excuse for bureaucrats to get together to “conduct business” that goes nowhere, but costs money.

OWEB Response (Goal 4 – Comment Two)

The watershed is an important geographic and ecological unit for integrating the work from multiple agencies and owners. This requires partnership development which leads to the most

efficient use of public monies by public agencies. OWEB believes the language in the goal describing to what end the partnerships are being developed is appropriate and useful.

Goal 5 and Strategy Comments (pages 12-13)

Comment One – Long Tom Watershed Council

What does “highly” really mean? Either we’re efficient and accountable or we’re not. The Watershed Council’s concern is the danger of the pursuit of this goal getting out of balance in relation to the pursuit of the other goals, perhaps even being used to thwart the others. Of particular concern is the emphasis on “highly” because this suggests that just being efficient and accountable either isn’t enough or those words don’t mean anything anymore.

“Highly” suggests that something close to perfection is the goal and that the importance is fear-based or we’re trying to convince someone we’re not lying. If the efficiency and accountability is taken too far we are concerned it can impede smaller, community-based organizations from being part of the picture. In our area, we have already seen grantees with good reputations suffer under increasing forms, paperwork, and extra administrative procedures communicated as rules to local grantees. “Accountability” is paperwork and staff time, and we need enough to be satisfactory, reasonable, and impressive but not perfect.

As important is the need to remain flexible enough to support the spirit of local volunteerism and the ability to support innovation and adaptive management. These are methods and techniques we’re counting on for success of the Oregon Plan and they need to be specifically enabled in the broader mission and goal language.

Goal 5: Ensure efficient and accountable administration of all investments in balance with supporting a spirit of local volunteerism and the ability to support innovation and adaptive management.

OWEB Response (Goal 5 Comment)

Goal 5 is modified to read: “Ensure efficient and accountable administration of all investments.”

OWEB agrees that efficiency and accountability must be balanced and support innovation and adaptive management. This language is included in the narrative for Goal 5, which now reads: “OWEB’s core function is the administration of a competitive grant program, which has experienced significant growth in the number of grants and funding award amounts over the past ten years. The timely, accurate and transparent administration of all aspects of the program is an everyday activity for all employees. This approach benefits the agency and its partners by providing streamlined processes and necessary resources to carry out watershed and habitat restoration and conservation in an expeditious and responsible manner. OWEB will continue to focus on this important goal and continue to look for opportunities for advancement and improvement while balancing and supporting flexibility, innovation and adaptive management.”

Actions

Goal 1, Strategy 1, Actions Comments (page 6-7)

Comment One – MidCoast Watersheds Council

Re-examine the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities making them consistent with the vision and incorporate climate change strategies as they emerge from international, national, state and local sources.

While we think that re-examination of priorities in light of climate change is a good thing to do, as the Draft Vision Statement is currently written, we do not see much that would warrant much re-examination of priorities. Our suggested language above in our Comment 5 on what actions “the vision requires” (mentioning climate change, population growth and other stressors and emphasizing continuing guidance based on the best technical knowledge) would provide the link to consistency with the vision that this Action requires.

Comment Two – Defenders of Wildlife

Add an action item and revise other actions as suggested below:

Action 1: Work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to align and integrate OWEB’s restoration and acquisition priorities with the Oregon Conservation Strategy, salmon recovery plans, and climate change considerations.

Action ~~12~~: ~~Re-examine~~ Revise the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities ~~making to make~~ them consistent with the vision and incorporate climate change strategies as they emerge from international, national, state and local sources.

Action ~~23~~: Board adopts final set of Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

Action 4: OWEB enhances the grant application development and review processes, including the makeup of Regional Review Teams, to incorporate the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to ensure projects are strategic and deliver watershed and ecological function and process outcomes consistent with the vision.

Action 6: Encourage and support programs that result in positive long-term economic outcomes for landowners while achieving habitat conservation objectives and sustainable watershed improvements.

Action 7: Work with partners to develop, and adopt and apply standardized metrics for use in quantifying the ecosystem services generated through OWEB’s investments.

Comment Three – MidCoast Watersheds Council

Action 4: OWEB enhances the grant application development and review processes to incorporate the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to ensure projects are strategic and deliver watershed and ecological function and process outcomes consistent with the vision.

As we recommended above for Strategy 1, Action 4 should also reference limiting factors and should mention expansion of healthy functioning areas (from the suggested vision requirements).

Proposed language: OWEB enhances the grant application development and review processes to incorporate the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to ensure projects are strategic, address limiting factors, maintain and expand areas of high functionality, or otherwise deliver watershed and ecological function and process outcomes consistent with the vision.

Comment Four – MidCoast Watersheds Council

Action 6: Encourage and support programs that result in positive long-term economic outcomes for landowners while achieving sustainable watershed improvements.

This is good. At the September 2009 Board Meeting our coordinator commented on the use of the word “sustainable.” The current language solves the problems with its use in the previous draft.

Comment Five – MidCoast Watersheds Council

Action 3: OWEB enhances access to, and knowledge of, adopted Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

This proposed action is important, and we strongly support it. OWEB also needs to provide/improve access to the databases supporting the priorities, and streamline processes for updating priorities by incorporating new information. Linkage to science and technical documents supporting such priorities is also key.

OWEB Response (Goal 1, Strategy 1 Actions – All Comments)

Modified changes have been accepted to the actions based upon the comments above, except for the proposal regarding ecosystem services in Comment Two. OWEB believes that comment is covered in Goal 1, Strategy 1, Action 7 and Goal 2, Strategy 3, Action 3. Developing standardized metrics for ecosystem services will be an important tool.

The Goal 1, Strategy 1 action items have been revised to read as follows:

“Action 1: Work with partners to update OWEB’s restoration and acquisition priorities and align them with the Oregon Conservation Strategy, species conservation and recovery plans, water quality management plans, local watershed assessments and climate change strategies as they emerge from international, national, state and local sources.

Action 2: Periodically review and update the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to reflect changes in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation strategies and plan or lessons learned from the monitoring and research program status review.

Action 3: Board adopts final set of Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

Action 4: OWEB enhances access to, and knowledge of, adopted Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

Action 5: OWEB enhances the grant application development and review processes to incorporate the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to ensure projects are strategic and deliver watershed and ecological function and process outcomes consistent with the vision.

Action 6: Continue investment in the Willamette and Deschutes Special Investment Programs (SIPs) and work with partners to explore additional SIPs and other partnerships.

Action 7: Encourage and support programs that result in positive long-term economic outcomes for landowners while achieving watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.”

Goal 1, Strategy 2, Actions Comments (page 8)

Comment One – Defenders of Wildlife

Action 1: Undertake a monitoring and research program status review to describe the lessons learned, the current use of data and analyses, and the actions needed to successfully implement this strategy. Update acquisition and restoration priorities to reflect lessons learned.

OWEB Response (Goal 1, Strategy 2 Actions Comment)

The requested action is included in the revised Goal 1, Strategy 1, Action 2, which now reads: “Periodically review and update the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to reflect changes in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation strategies and plans or lessons learned from the monitoring and research program status review.”

Goal 2, Strategy 1, Actions Comments (page 9)

Comment One – Cyndi Karp

The second concern that I have is related to the Fair and Equitable Support of Watershed Councils across the State of Oregon. OWEB needs to find and set aside a Permanent Funding Source for Support Systems for Watershed Councils.

A Watershed Councils requires a base budget to support Coordinator's and Office Salaries. There are Liability Insurance expenses. I believe that OWEB needs to support each Watershed Council to have a good Web Page. The more successful the Watershed Council, the more Financial Support of the Council is going to require. The more grants that are proposed and written up, the higher the Fixed Cost of Support will be. Watershed Councils are currently competing for Funding. There has been in the past trouble caused between Watershed Council's fighting for the funding for the Watershed Council to Survive. Some Watershed Councils in the state have not survived. Some continue to fight for survival. Just

having Volunteers does not solve the Financial Support problems of a Watershed Council. A permanent funding source for a fair and equitable Watershed Council Support System needs to be addresses in the Final OWEB Strategic Plan. The world of fighting for Grant funding among each other is against the basic principles of the OWEB Strategic Plan. There is never enough money to go around to do all of the Watershed Projects that need to be done. The system of Grant selection is very competitive. What concerns me is that Grants are so competitive that the Grant System pits Watershed Councils against each other for funding. Can Cooperation among Watershed Councils solve the fighting for grants? Maybe, but it is not always easy to bring people together that have to fight each other for survival. I believe to my core that Cooperation can Accomplish Common Goals.

In the State of Oregon the last 13 years, I have witness and participated in a Eco-System Based Cooperation among Oregonian's that is drawing World wide attention. More funding sources for Watershed Basin Cooperation Projects is sorely needed.

OWEB Response (Goal 2, Strategy 1 Actions Comment)

No changes were made to the strategic plan based upon these comments. OWEB believes that Goal 2, Strategy 1, Action 1 of the strategic plan adequately addresses the concerns in this comment.

Goal 2, Strategy 3, Actions Comments (page 10)

Comment One – MidCoast Watersheds Council

We support very much the 3 actions listed, but propose a fourth, which would explore additional direct assistance to councils and SWCDs, and possibly others, for particular tasks that might increase local organizational resilience and capacity. OWEB has one model already in place for this: the use of PCSRF funds to help defray costs of participating in recovery planning efforts. Additional, comparable opportunities could include OWEB using or brokering PCSRF and/or BPA funds to enhance local organizations' roles in recovery plan implementation teams, and OWEB working with WRD on processes for improving local groups' capacities to take part in WRD's current efforts to develop a statewide Integrated Water Resource Strategy. Likely additional opportunities exist, as yet unrecognized.

Proposed, very rough language: Action 4: Explore opportunities to partner with other agencies in enhancing local groups' capacities for contributing positively to those agencies' actions relevant to this Strategic Plan's Mission Statement and Goals.

Comment Two – Defenders of Wildlife

Add one action to read: Action 4: Work with the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts and other partners to identify options for strengthening capacity for land conservation to support OWEB's long-term investment strategies.

OWEB Response (Goal 2, Strategy 3 Actions – All Comments)

The proposed language of Action 4 in Comment One is an important issue that did not come up during Board discussions and is raised for the first time. No change is proposed as the

Board needs to engage in a discussion about this issue before considering whether to change the strategic plan to incorporate this proposed action.

Similarly, the language proposed in Comment Two envisions long-term investment strategies that the OWEB Board has not discussed and is not prepared to commit to at this time. This will be an important conversation for the Board to have as it goes forward to implement the local infrastructure actions as proposed in Goal 2, Strategy 1.

Goal 3, Strategy 1, Actions Comments (page 11)

Comment One – MidCoast Watersheds Council

For Strategy 1: Help build and support effective outreach and education by local partners.

Action 1: Develop and implement simple, effective and strategic awareness messages and messaging tools aligned with OWEB’s strategic plan.

Action 2: Develop a range of tools for OWEB grant recipients to use to further the Strategy and implement Action 1.

Action 3: Coordinate and develop specific plans with other agencies and partners to deliver consistent messages.

Action 4: [RE-NUMBERED] Work with partners to develop and implement the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan (“No Child Left Inside”).

Action 5. [NEW] Increase knowledge of effective education and engagement strategies, programs, and tools through detailed descriptions of projects from around the state through the OWEB website and at conferences.

Comment Two – Defenders of Wildlife

Action 5: Review and enhance ~~the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds~~ OWEB’s Biennial Report to further the goals of the Strategic Plan and Strategic Communications Plan.

OWEB Response (Goal 3, Strategy 1 Actions – All Comments)

Goal 3, Strategy 1 has been revised to clarify the intent that it focuses on OWEB’s outreach and awareness statutory mandate. Some of the proposed language from the Comment One is incorporated into new actions proposed in Goal 3, Strategy 2. One action in Strategy 1 was revised and one was added to reflect that a Strategic Communication Plan has been adopted by the OWEB Board.

The proposed change in Comment Two was not made because current statutes require OWEB to submit a Biennial Report on the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. One potential avenue to implement Action 4 – “Compile a history of OWEB investments and ecological outcomes” – may be the Oregon Plan Biennial Report.

Goal 3, Strategy 2, Actions Comments

Comment One – MidCoast Watersheds Council

For Strategy 2: Help promote awareness of the ecological outcomes of OWEB investments.

Action 1: [RE-NUMBERED] Compile a history of OWEB investments and ecological outcomes (“Decade of Investment”) to describe how OWEB has invested on behalf of Oregonians to improve and protect watersheds and the ecosystems they support.

Action 2: [RE-NUMBERED] Review and enhance the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watershed Biennial Report into OWEB’s Biennial Report to further the goals of the Strategic Plan and Strategic Communications Plan.

Action 3: [RE-NUMBERED] Use the Strategic Communication Plan to guide education and outreach grant offerings.

OWEB Response (Goal 3, Strategy 2 Actions Comment)

Strategy 2 has been revised to clarify its intent to be the strategy for implementation of OWEB’s education and involvement authorities. Some of the proposed changes have been incorporated into Goal 3, Strategy 1 actions.

Section Two: Implementation and Process Comments

Some of the comments received are suggestions for how to implement a particular strategy or action. They are more detailed than the level of the strategic plan. Those comments should not be lost and are included below for staff to review as work plans are developed to implement the strategic plan. Some comments include an explanatory reply.

Comment One – Oregon Invasive Species Council

The document lacks some key elements of a strategic plan. There are no "core principles" defined. There is no SWOT analysis - an articulation of OWEB's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. There are no performance metrics.

Given the role that OWEB plays in advancing watershed health in Oregon, an articulation of core principles would advance an understanding of its mission. Perhaps characterizing the statements at the bottom of page 4 as “core principles” would strengthen this portion of the document.

It is critical that OWEB conduct a SWOT analysis as part of its strategic plan so that it reflects on its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and communicates that SWOT analysis in its strategic plan—with emphasis on how OWEB will respond to the analysis. Only by conducting this activity can OWEB anchor its mission, vision, core principles, goals, objectives, and strategies. Without a SWOT analysis, the public will have difficulty understanding the unique role OWEB plays in watershed restoration in Oregon

relative to other agencies and organizations that conduct work in watersheds. The document fails to articulate OWEB's niche in Oregon. Why is OWEB best suited to do what it does, versus another organization or entity managing lottery dollars?

How has OWEB assessed its success over the past 10 years? The short “Where are we now?” sections don’t seem adequate in terms of their depth and breadth. How much money has OWEB distributed/managed in Oregon since 2001? In what geographic areas? At a recent Board meeting, our Council was asked by an OWEB Board member how OWEB can determine its effectiveness. Development of performance metrics will allow OWEB to assess itself and will allow the public to assess OWEB.

Recommendation: Identify OWEB’s core principles, conduct and communicate a SWOT analysis, identify OWEB’s niche, and develop performance metrics as part of the strategic plan.

Comment Two – Oregon Invasive Species Council

There is no description of the groups/partners that contributed to the development of this plan, nor is there any mention of the public process used to gain input. And although partnerships are referenced in more than 40 locations in the new strategic plan, the expected outcomes of these partnerships are not clearly articulated. In addition, Goal 4 on page 5 references the types of partners OWEB wishes to work with, but this list does not include academic institutions or industry representatives. Both of these types of entities play important roles in advancing and communicating sound science (academic institutions) as well as helping to leverage funds and perform other important functions as part of the government/nonprofit/private industry three-legged stool.

Recommendation: Include the list of partners that were involved in the development of OWEB’s new strategic plan, including the IMST that provides scientific guidance (organization name and name of individual that participated in planning sessions), consider expanding the types of groups OWEB wishes to work with to include academic institutions and industry representatives, and develop clear, measurable objectives related to work with partners. Consider a futuring workshop with partners focused specifically on long-term strategic initiatives for OWEB.

Comment Three – Oregon Invasive Species Council

Many federal, state, local, and tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, and companies are actively involved in watershed restoration, management, policy development, research, and monitoring. However, OWEB’s strategic plan does not acknowledge the “state of the state.” What is the status of watershed restoration in Oregon? How will implementation of this strategic plan address the highest priority weaknesses in watershed restoration, through OWEB’s efforts and collaborative efforts with partners? How will what OWEB does help Oregon to achieve the goals in Oregon’s Conservation Strategy? Where are the gaps in watershed restoration in Oregon, and does this plan address those gaps?

Recommendation: Add an analysis of the “state of the state” (also termed environmental scans in the strategic planning arena) of watershed restoration in Oregon so that readers will understand how the goals, objectives, and strategies in the strategic plan address gaps in restoration efforts.

OWEB Response (Implementation and Process Comments One-Three)

There are various ways to approach strategic planning. OWEB decided to look at driving forces as their approach. We also chose an abbreviated process so there was not sufficient time to develop metrics that would normally be done after acceptance of the strategies and actions. OWEB currently has a number of performance measures we must report on and will be examining the alignment of those with the final strategic plan. Additional measures may be created.

OWEB senior staff and Board were the primary participants in the workshops. Interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders and all staff. Summaries of their interviews were made available to the workshop participants. The Board represents a broad range of expertise and organizations.

The state of the state of watershed restoration would be a very large undertaking. It could be worthwhile if specific goals were outlined for what information about the work is most needed. The knowledge and expertise of the staff, stakeholders and Board is in effect an environmental scan and helped identify driving forces that are most likely to impact watersheds and OWEB. The OWEB Board believes the process has created an excellent strategic guidance document. The process is described in a separate report to OWEB.

Comment Four – MidCoast Watersheds Council

Goal 5, Strategy 1. Continue to evaluate, explore and implement grant administrative processes to maintain and enhance efficiencies at all levels.

We support this goal, and have some specific suggestions for Action 1: Conduct an independent review of OWEB’s business processes to identify ways to improve communications and streamline and simplify the processes for staff, applicants and grantees, without compromising accountability and legal requirements.

We would like to see this review to include the following opportunities to possibly simplify processes.

1. Electronic grant application submissions, with further modifications to the application based on analysis if each of the sections of each application is actually a basis for decision making by the grant review team members. If it is not, the application should be simplified accordingly.
2. A detailed review, with grantee participation, of just what information is needed to document expenditures of grant funds, with a goal of reducing requirements for non-essential information.
3. An analysis, with grantee participation, of best ways to honor legitimate privacy and confidentiality concerns of grantees, their partners' and their participating landowners. Because OWEB is a state agency, all paperwork submitted becomes publicly available.

We would like to see careful consideration to limit information submissions to that which is truly necessary for OWEB to be effective.

4. Effort to update/produce QuickBooks applications and make them available to grantees for use in managing OWEB grants. We are aware of the past effort to SWCDs in partnership with OACD, and we are also aware that new reporting forms are being developed that are not supported by that computer application, creating additional work. We think that use of this software should be voluntary to grantees, but is very useful to both OWEB and those grantees that participate. We are aware that many Watershed Councils, at least, would welcome an opportunity to streamline processes in this way.

Comment Five – Jeffrey Kee

Local Infrastructure: OWEB needs to be more responsible and accountable for funds given to other organizations to carry out the mission of OWEB. Funds given to ODA and/or federal partners to implement related programs (ie CREP) need to be critically evaluated. If investments are not providing good returns...take the political heat and move those funds to more effective investments.

Councils, Districts, non-profits and other governments receiving OWEB funds need to be evaluated with clear and consistent methods. And if OWEB wants to meet many of the goals implemented in the draft strategy it seems there may be a benefit to requiring everybody that gets support to do at least one of the actions identified....For example...every organization that receives OWEB support is required to have at least two stories written highlighting a successful project supported by OWEB, and/or every organization receiving funds has a prioritized strategy and a monitoring program that provides feedback on their success. Every OWEB funded project will have a sign stating who and where the partners are, every landowner that receives a capitol grant agrees to an annual tour for the public.

OWEB should consider reducing support for SWCD's that have secured large tax bases. Organizations with more staff are able to produce more and better grant applications. Theoretically they can build their own capacity more easily now and rural districts (and Councils) will continue to struggle.

Comment Six – Jeffrey Kee

Ecosystem Services: OWEB needs to develop a system that can account and track ecosystem services. Carbon sequestering, increasing water availability and increasing the number of redds are valuable commodities. The future value could be great as ecosystem markets mature, but there is an immediate value for a systematic accounting system that can tell us what our public investments are buying. A system that allows the state of Oregon and the local partner maintaining the ecosystem to realize real value would prepare Oregon to be a sustained leader in this field.

Comment Seven – Jeffrey Kee

Public Support: More work needs to be done in this area...how about underwriting a series with Oregon Field Guide that looks at 10 years worth of OWEB's supervision of the public's investment. See above also.

Acquisitions need to require permanent transfer of the majority of any consumptive surface water right permanently in-stream.

Comment Eight – Jeffrey Kee

Partnerships: OWEB should consider letting out some restoration contracts to some for-profit private and public companies. This may show that it is more effective to have non-governmental organizations do watershed restoration. See above for more partner accountability.

Comment Nine – Jeffrey Kee

Efficiency and Accountability: OWEB has to improve this or OWEB will go away. And OWEB has to put strong, clear, consistent mechanisms in place to make sure organizations that receive public investments are efficient and accountable.

OWEB staff has always been great to work with, and it might be a great goal to state that OWEB wants to have the best and the brightest of the conservation community and will continue to invest in their continued growth. A job trade between OWEB staff and organizations that receive OWEB funds might bear additional effectiveness and efficiency.

Comment Ten – Thomas Stahl

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife supports OWEB's draft Strategic Plan and looks forward to working with OWEB toward its implementation. The only additional comment that I offer is that the Strategic Plan does not specifically mention the potential role that conservation plans (developed under the State's Native Fish Conservation Policy) and recovery plans (developed to address federal listing under the Endangered Species Act) may have in achieving many of the strategies and actions for the five goals. These plans represent significant efforts that provide a more detailed and specific "roadmap" to conservation and recovery of the State's listed fish and wildlife species than the overarching plans that they support, such as the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds and the Oregon Conservation Strategy. We hope that they will be considered as OWEB implements the Strategic Plan.

Comment Eleven – Oregon Invasive Species Council

Invasive species is not mentioned in this plan, yet invasive species has the potential to significantly alter healthy watershed ecosystem functions. The following statement from the US Environmental Protection Agency is one of literally thousands that document the effect of invasive species on watersheds:

“It is increasingly important that watershed managers become aware of invasive species in their watersheds, in both the aquatic and terrestrial environments. Aquatic invaders are clearly of concern to a water resources manager, but invasive species in the watershed can have significant effects on water quality and aquatic ecosystem health due to the ways they affect bank stability and the volume and pollution levels in runoff.”

In addition, the Oregon Conservation Strategy notes that “Control of invasive species is considered one of six key issues of statewide concern in the Oregon Conservation Strategy.”²

Nine of the 10 of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's 10 Most Unwanted Species³ are aquatic species. The tenth, feral swine, is associated with aquatic habitats and riparian corridors, where facilitation of weed invasion by disturbance is a major concern, particularly in Oregon. Rooting in riparian areas may be contributing to the spread of knotweed in Oregon.

Invasive species issues consumed an entire day-long session at the OWEB conference in November of 2008. One of the clinics: Watershed Councils Building Partnerships to Address Invasive Species invited participants to weigh in on important questions facing watershed councils and their partners as they attempt to manage invasive species at the watershed scale. Since 2009, OWEB has funded about \$33.4 million for investments in watershed programs and projects that include work on invasive species. Omission of invasive species-related strategies in this plan, given past funding in this arena, fails to highlight this achievement and overlooks opportunities for OWEB's continued support for invasive species control/eradication/outreach initiatives.

Recommendation: Acknowledge the threat of invasive species to Oregon's watersheds and develop specific objectives and strategies to reduce that threat and align with the objectives of the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

OWEB Response (Implementation and Process Comments Four-Eleven)

OWEB agrees that invasive species are a major concern. Controlling invasive species is part of many OWEB projects. OWEB has not listed all the specific management activities that might contribute to a restored, healthy watershed in this plan. Controlling invasive species would be one of those. This plan is intended to be at a high level and not specify recommendations about management practices. Under Goal 1, strategy 1, action 2 invasive species will be included in restoration priorities work. In response to Comment Eleven, an action item was added to Goal 1, Strategy 1, Action 1 to specifically coordinate with the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Strategic Plan

DRAFT

December 2009

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE #360
Salem, Oregon 97301

DRAFT

Oregon's Conservation Legacy

People have a deep and enduring connection to Oregon's natural environment—the cool and clean water of its rivers and lakes, the rich diversity of its fish and wildlife, and the inspiring beauty and variety of its landscapes. Generations of Native Americans have been sustained by the land's abundant natural resources. In the nineteenth century trappers, settlers, farmers, and ranchers made the arduous trek to Oregon attracted by the special qualities of Oregon's lands and waters. Oregonians continue to deepen their tie to the lands and waters on which they live, work, and play.

This collective care and appreciation for the state's natural places and working landscapes has created a strong and enduring legacy of conservation in Oregon. Looking back, Oregon's conservation legacy is embodied in milestone actions involving incentives for recycling (the bottle bill), protecting unique and special places for the public to enjoy (the beach bill), and the development of land use planning laws to protect important land uses and prevent unchecked urban sprawl.

The most recent expression of Oregon's conservation legacy has been quietly and effectively taking place in communities around the state for ten years. Local groups—primarily watershed councils (councils) and soil and water conservation districts (districts)—are engaging farmers, ranchers, foresters, and other landowners to voluntarily work with other partners to take actions on their properties that help restore and protect our natural environment. Together, these local, cooperative actions are writing the most recent chapter to Oregon's conservation legacy.

These actions are possible because Oregon voters decided in 1998 to dedicate Lottery Fund dollars to support grants for clean water and to improve and protect habitat for fish and wildlife. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is the state agency responsible for administering these grants.

OWEB is a non-regulatory public investment board that employs a locally driven, collaborative conservation approach to watershed enhancement. OWEB solicits and awards grants to improve and protect watershed health and monitors project effectiveness so all partners can adaptively manage the resource. OWEB is led by a policy oversight board that represents state, tribal, and federal interests, as well as the public at large.

OWEB's grant programs support voluntary efforts that result in:

- Projects that restore and protect natural processes and functions of watersheds;
- A statewide network of councils, districts, and other local groups that develop and implement restoration projects;
- Citizen awareness of watershed issues and participation in restoration and protection actions;
- Strong and lasting partnerships to address complex natural resources issues; and
- Jobs and the purchase of goods and services in local communities.

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Mission and Vision

OWEB has been working from a mission statement ~~since created in~~ 2001. This strategic plan aligns that mission statement with statutory language and expands the mission statement with a vision statement. The vision statement was developed from discussions between board members and management staff, input from staff and stakeholders, and OWEB's experience in implementing its mission over the past ten years.

Mission Statement

A mission statement is a brief description of an organization's fundamental purpose. OWEB's mission is:

To help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies.

Vision Statement

A vision statement articulates the dreams and hopes for an organization. OWEB's vision is:

OWEB is ~~recognized as~~ a leader in the conservation of Oregon's ~~vast~~ natural resources and enjoys strong public support for its contributions to community-based conservation, watershed health, and local economies.

The vision calls for ~~Oregon's watersheds to include healthy river systems and well managed upland healthy~~ landscapes across Oregon capable of sustaining and enriching ~~Oregon's the state's~~ biological diversity, ecosystems, fish and wildlife habitat, and agricultural, forest, and human communities.

Watersheds have three primary functions with regard to water. They capture, store, and release water. The entire watershed, ridgetop to ridgetop and headwaters to confluence, is essential to these processes. Floodplains of rivers are complex systems that evolved over time, shaped by the soils, topography, vegetation, and other natural forces. In addition to water-related functions, watersheds are also landscapes that ~~provide~~create fish and wildlife habitats essential to the natural functioning of entire ecosystems.

OWEB's vision will guide future decisions about programs and funding priorities. This vision requires:

- *Integrated investments in projects that emphasize protection and/or restoration of watershed processes and ecosystem functions required by Oregon's native fish and wildlife;*
- *A ridgetop to ridgetop and headwaters to confluence approach to achieving healthy watersheds;*
- *Dynamic river and floodplain systems that interact with physical and ecological processes;*
- *~~High w~~Water quality that supports Oregon's native fish and wildlife species and meets human ~~needs~~requirements;*
- *Involved community members including both public and private interests that build and sustain a watershed stewardship ethic;*

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- *Use of science and experience to guide priorities, projects and assessments; and*
- *Monitoring to support adaptive management and efficienteffective investments
efficiencies of the resource.*

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Goals, Strategies, and Implementation Actions

The OWEB Board has established the following goals, strategies and actions in support of OWEB's vision. In order to effectively consider and implement the strategies and actions identified below, OWEB staff will develop work plans and realign staff workload to achieve vision-driven priorities. Measures of progress and success will be developed and aligned with currently required reporting measures.

Goals

OWEB's goals are to:

- Goal 1: Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through program and project investments that enhance~~incorporate~~ watershed and ecosystem functions and processes and support community needs.**
- Goal 2: Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.**
- Goal 3: Provide information to help Oregonians understand the need for and engage in activities that support healthy watersheds.**
- Goal 4: Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.~~health~~.**
- Goal 5: Ensure highly efficient and accountable administration of all investments.**

These goals are further described below, including strategies and actions.

Strategies and Actions

Adaptive Investment

- Goal 1: Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through program and project investments that enhance~~incorporate~~ watershed and ecosystem functions and processes and support community needs.**

OWEB faces the challenge of funding a mix of programs and projects across the state with many partners to build a broad restoration and monitoring infrastructure. Population growth and climate change will affect communities around the state and the watershed processes and functions upon which those communities and fish and wildlife depend. These driving forces are significant and their impact is uncertain. The key to achieving OWEB's vision is an adaptive, principled, and well structured investment strategy that incorporates monitoring and evaluation into local project development and implementation~~and program evaluation~~. Monitoring information is the basis for adapting investment and management activities to achieve the most effective and resilient outcomes.

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Strategy 1: Maintain and enhance restoration and protection programs that focus on watershed and ecosystem functions and processes, support sustainable working landscapes, and empower community-based conservation to address economic, social and environmental health.

Where are we now?

OWEB has worked for ten years to ~~enhance and maintain~~restore and protect healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies. OWEB achieves this by working closely with local partners to provide watershed enhancement grants, providing funding to support the capacity of watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts, partnering with other agencies and organizations, monitoring and managing information, and reporting on implementation of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. OWEB's mission and work also support and complement governmental climate change policy and priorities through locally based, on-the-ground work to improve watershed health and resilience, which will become increasingly important to address the effects of climate change.

OWEB has developed tools to assist partners in the strategic development of restoration or conservation projects. OWEB adopted priorities for land acquisition grants in 2004. OWEB has also developed and begun to implement a framework, known as Restoration Priorities, that establishes priorities at regional geographic scales to assist in the evaluation of proposed improvement projects at the local watershed level. The framework was developed to categorize actions by the effect they will have on ecosystem function and process. Five general types of activities have been identified as ways to address watershed function improvement, including activities that:

- ~~Actions that r~~Restore habitat connectivity;
- ~~Actions that a~~Address impaired watershed processes ~~that affecting the~~aquatic systems or water quality;
- ~~Actions that a~~Address key habitats and water quality for at-risk and ESA-listed species;
- ~~Actions that r~~Reduce human impacts and inputs to the watershed; and
- ~~Actions that a~~Address symptoms of impaired watershed and ecosystem functions and processes ~~and functions~~ that impact fish and wildlife habitat or water quality.

OWEB's Restoration grant applications require applicants to address how their proposal fits with the Restoration Priorities; this is one of the factors evaluated by OWEB's Regional Review Teams when developing funding recommendations for OWEB consideration. The Review Teams also consider technical merit, feasibility, likelihood of success, experience of the applicant, and budget.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Work with partners to update OWEB's Restoration and Acquisition Priorities and align them with the Oregon Conservation Strategy, species conservation and recovery plans, water quality management plans, local watershed assessments and climate change strategies as they emerge from international, national, state, and local sources.

Action ~~2~~4: ~~Re-examine~~RevisePeriodically review and update the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to reflect changes in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation strategies and plan, or lessons learned from the monitoring and research program status review~~to making them~~

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~~consistent with the vision and incorporate climate change strategies as they emerge from international, national, state and local sources.~~

Action ~~32~~: Board adopts final set of Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

Action ~~43~~: OWEB enhances access to, and knowledge of, adopted Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

Action ~~54~~: OWEB enhances the grant application development and review processes to incorporate the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to ensure projects are strategic and deliver watershed and ecological function and process outcomes consistent with the vision.

Action ~~65~~: Continue investment in the Willamette and Deschutes Special Investment Partnerships (SIPs) and work with partners to explore additional SIPs and other partnerships.

Action ~~76~~: Encourage and support programs that result in positive long-term economic outcomes for landowners while achieving ~~sustainable watershed improvements, and habitat restoration and conservation.~~

Strategy 2: Implement monitoring and research programs to build knowledge and strengthen feedback about OWEB investments and critical uncertainties to support adaptive management for outcome improvements.

Where are we now?

In 2003, the Board adopted a far-reaching and long-term strategy to guide coordinated monitoring efforts under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. From this strategy, OWEB initiated an effectiveness monitoring program in 2005. To date, effectiveness monitoring has been initiated on many of the top 25 restoration program areas funded cumulatively since 1999. These monitoring projects include detailed evaluations of riparian planting and fencing, fish barrier removal, irrigation efficiency, western juniper removal, dam removal, in-stream large wood placement, road removal and rehabilitation, wetland restoration, tide gate replacement, and others.

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The actions under Strategy 2 provide the building blocks for understanding the results of OWEB investments from the project level to the cumulative impact of all investments. The data collected through the implementation of this strategy will be assembled into information that will

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be shared under the Goal 3, Strategy 1, for the purpose of building awareness, success, and support for OWEB actions.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Undertake a monitoring and research program status review to describe the lessons learned, the current use of data and analyses, and the actions needed to successfully implement this strategy.

Action 2: Implement the appropriate compliance and effectiveness monitoring in key investment areas and the remaining one third of OWEB's top restoration investment areas.

Action 3: Assemble data, information, lessons learned, and stories from effectiveness monitoring that will be used to implement Goal 3 to build awareness and understanding.

Action 4: Continue to work with partners through collaborative workgroups and by providing funding through grants to high priority monitoring activities.

Action 5: Continue to establish and maintain databases internally and through grants used to store, analyze, and provide the backbone of information delivery through electronic and traditional forms of communication.

Action 6: Revise OWEB Research Priorities to align with Board goals related to climate change, Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, and the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Local infrastructure development

Goal 2: Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed [and habitat](#) restoration and conservation.

Watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, [land trusts](#), and [other](#) nongovernmental organizations are key partners in implementing OWEB's watershed [and habitat restoration and conservation](#) program. Councils and districts account for roughly two-thirds of OWEB grants. They play a critical role in working with interested landowners to design projects, apply for grants, implement restoration projects, monitor project results, and provide local watershed education. [Land trusts work with willing landowners to protect lands with important ecological or habitat values](#). The work of [all](#) these ~~local~~ partners also provides significant community and economic benefits. Success of OWEB's mission and vision requires these partners to have sufficient capacity and funding to continue and enhance their work. In addition, watershed restoration and protection needs are so great that more partners at the local level are needed.

Strategy 1: Establish and articulate policies related to the support and development of a diverse local infrastructure for watershed restoration.

Where are we now?

OWEB is exploring a diverse approach to building local infrastructure to support restoration and conservation. This includes watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, [land trusts](#), [and other](#) nongovernmental organizations and landowners. Partnerships are encouraged to

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organize at a scale that can be sustained over the long term. OWEB continues to explore issues related to the number of councils and the best ways to manage and fund a high capacity infrastructure.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Work with watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, [land trusts](#), public and private foundations, tribes, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations to identify needs and funding partners to strengthen their ability to build capacity and develop a diverse and enduring local infrastructure.

Action 2: Identify and evaluate alternative organizational structures to achieve more stable local infrastructure.

Strategy 2: Evaluate and adjust watershed council support grant review and funding processes to build local capacity, provide base funding, and promote strategic partnerships.

Where are we now?

The legislature currently provides councils and districts with a base level of funding of \$5 million each, every two years. During the 2007-2009 biennium, OWEB supplemented this base funding with an additional \$1 million each. Councils and districts work to supplement OWEB's funding by seeking other funding such as foundation grants, memberships, donations, business contributions, and for some districts, local taxes. The level of support and resources varies based on the leadership, capacity, and geographic location of these organizations. OWEB recognizes that more support needs to be provided to help build sustainable local organizations to carry on watershed restoration work.

This strategy only addresses the support grants for watershed councils. Soil and water conservation district support funding is provided by OWEB through the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which runs its own distribution and accountability processes.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Develop funding policy guidelines for achieving sustainable council support.

Action 2: Develop policy guidance for the Board on council requests for solo funding ("splitting" from umbrella councils) for the 2011-2013 council support grant awards.

Action 3: Work with applicants, reviewers, and others to explore options regarding how OWEB funds councils, including looking at new applicant funding, base funding, partnership incentives, outcomes from OWEB funding, and other issues.

Strategy 3: Provide technical assistance to build capacity, secure additional funding and increase local organizational resilience.

Where are we now?

OWEB has provided funding to support capacity building for watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts through the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (Network) and Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). OWEB's funding also supports coordination and cooperation between OACD and the Network to the benefit of councils,

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districts, and OWEB. The work of these organizations directly complements the funding for councils and districts and helps their respective groups perform at a high level and communicate their successes.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Require specific capacity building products and expectations as deliverables for the funding provided to the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils and Oregon Association of Conservation Districts.

Action 2: Reserve non-capital funds to contract with one or more organizations to deliver additional capacity building services in 2009-2011.

Action 3: Continue working with partners and exploring possibilities to develop tools and strategies for ecosystem services market participation that may diversify revenue streams for local infrastructure, and leverage and diversify project and maintenance/monitoring funding.

Public ~~Support~~ Awareness and Involvement

Goal 3: Provide information to help Oregonians understand the need for and engage in activities that support healthy watersheds.

All Oregonians appreciate and recognize the value of clean, abundant water. Fewer Oregonians recognize that clean, abundant water depends on functioning watersheds. Still fewer Oregonians identify the critical link between investments in watershed [and habitat restoration and conservation](#) and clean, abundant water [and healthy populations of fish and wildlife](#). It is important to expand the awareness that land and water management actions can improve and/or protect water quality. Healthy watersheds require an informed public that supports fish and wildlife habitat protection, well managed river corridors, agricultural and forest land stewardship and urban land and water management.

Strategy 1: ~~Engage~~ Make Oregonians on a broad level, reminding them aware of the importance of healthy watersheds and informing them, in broad strokes, of what has been accomplished on their behalf through the work of OWEB and others.

Where are we now?

OWEB was created in 1999 and now has over a decade of projects and programs that illustrate the linkages between ecosystem health and community and economic sustainability. Every two years, OWEB develops a biennial report on the progress of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds that highlights implemented projects, local community efforts, and agency program accomplishments.

[In early 2009, the Board recognized that OWEB would benefit from outside assistance to develop effective messages, identify key outreach tools, and develop a strategic communications implementation plan to promote public awareness and involvement in the agency's watershed enhancement program. A Strategic Communications Plan was presented to the Board in fall of 2009 to help guide agency efforts to produce useful and timely information about our programs,](#)

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the people we work with, and our accomplishments in terms that are more accessible to the general public. For example,

After ten years it is important to compile a history of investments and ecological outcomes to help the public understand the value received. The more people know about the public investments in watershed health and the benefits of those investments, the more they will value them and support continued funding of these efforts.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Develop and implement simple, effective and strategic awareness messages, and messaging tools aligned with OWEB's strategic plan.

Action 2: Develop a range of tools for OWEB grant recipients to use to further the Strategy and implement Action 1.

Action 3: Coordinate and develop specific plans with other agencies and partners to deliver consistent messages.

Action 4: Compile a history of OWEB investments and ecological outcomes ("Decade of Investment") to describe how OWEB has invested on behalf increase awareness of the accomplishments of Oregonians to improve and protect watersheds ~~and the ecosystems they support.~~

Action 5: Review and enhance the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watershed Biennial Report to further the goals of the Strategic Plan and Strategic Communications Plan.

Action 6: Use the Strategic Communication Plan to guide outreach grant offerings.

Strategy 2: Encourage and facilitate greater exploration, and knowledge and appreciation of OWEB's accomplishments for those Oregonians who seek greater involvement in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

Where are we now?

OWEB administers a competitive grant program that invests approximately \$1 million a biennium in watershed education and outreach grants across Oregon. In 2005, OWEB developed an Education and Outreach Strategy to connect and support OWEB's education and outreach functions and investments. The strategy included three elements that build upon each other: enhance awareness; improve knowledge; and develop skills.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Increase knowledge of effective education and engagement strategies, programs, and tools through detailed descriptions of projects from around the state through the OWEB website and at conferences. ~~Develop and implement simple, effective and strategic education and involvement messages and messaging tools aligned with OWEB's strategic plan.~~

Action 2: Use the Strategic Communication Plan to guide education and outreach grant offerings ~~Build and support effective education efforts that increase Oregonian's knowledge and involvement in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.~~

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Action 3: Work with partners to develop and implement the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan (“No Child Left Inside”).

Partnership development

Goal 4: Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and private landowners for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation health.

OWEB combines the regulatory and land management programs of state and federal agencies and local governments with voluntary watershed restoration by private landowners and others. Over the years, solutions to address water quality, watershed health, native salmon habitat, and wildlife conservation have been achieved by building partnerships between government agencies, tribes, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts, and other nonprofit organizations, landowners, and citizens.

~~OWEB’s is charged with being the central organization for managing Measure 66 and federal funds for watershed enhancement and habitat conservation. This is a~~ grant based, non-regulatory program to improve watershed and ~~ecosystem health~~ habitat restoration and conservation that requires a high level of coordination and collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. OWEB ~~dollars funds~~ can be leveraged and partners can help inform the public about the successful watershed and habitat restoration and conservation work underway. There is clearly opportunity to expand the nature of current partnerships and create new partnerships.

Strategy 1: Identify new and expand existing strategic partnerships that leverage OWEB funds and knowledge to achieve healthy watershed and community outcomes.

Where are we now?

Partnerships are a required element for all OWEB investments. Partnerships range from the matching funds for individual grants to institutional arrangements to implement federally developed programs. OWEB maintains a portfolio of investments with different kinds of partners and at different levels of formal relationships. Criteria for evaluating formal partnerships has been developed and adopted by the Board.

OWEB has successful partnerships with local watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, state and federal agencies, tribes, local government, land trusts, private foundations, and other nongovernmental organizations.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Executive Director and the Board partnership subcommittee will identify and prioritize partnership development on behalf of OWEB consistent with the vision and Board-adopted partnership criteria.

Action 2: OWEB key messages will be developed and shared with partners. Specific plans will be developed for distribution of messages ~~by partners~~.

Efficient and Accountable Administration

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Goal 5: Ensure highly efficient and accountable administration of all investments.

OWEB's core function is the administration of a competitive grant program, which has experienced significant growth in the number of grants and funding award amounts over the past ten years. The timely, accurate, and transparent administration of all aspects of the program is an everyday activity for all employees. This approach benefits the agency and its partners by providing streamlined processes and necessary resources to carry out watershed [and habitat restoration and conservation](#) in an expeditious and responsible manner. OWEB will continue to focus on this important goal and continue to look for opportunities for advancement and improvement [while balancing and supporting flexibility, innovation, and adaptive management](#).

Strategy 1: Continue to evaluate, explore and implement grant administrative processes to maintain and enhance efficiencies at all levels.

Where are we now?

OWEB is in constant communication with staff to determine the most efficient ways to carry out its business. A staff review is conducted following each grant cycle to develop recommended improvements. OWEB has begun to develop digital processes for the organization, including a grant administration system and online reporting. Staff members in other program areas are working with partners to improve agency processes in order to better facilitate on-the-ground actions.

In addition to internal processes, OWEB benefits from third party reviews of its work. OWEB's grant process, files, and expenditures are audited every other year by the Secretary of State and OWEB has received a favorable audit each time. OWEB also conducts an annual customer service survey [that is reported to the Legislature as part of the agency's budget process](#).

Where are we going?

Action 1: Conduct an independent review of OWEB's business processes to identify ways to improve communications and streamline and simplify the processes for staff, applicants and grantees, without compromising accountability and legal requirements.

Action 2: Prioritize and implement business process recommendations.

Action 3: Explore options and develop information technology tools to increase efficiencies and meet the needs of stakeholders and staff.

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

Strategic Plan

DRAFT

December 2009

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE #360
Salem, Oregon 97301

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Message from Executive Director and Board

Dear Citizens, Stakeholders, and Partners;

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is a state agency that helps local communities take care of Oregon's streams, rivers, wetlands and natural areas. Local community members and property owners decide jointly what needs to be done to conserve and improve rivers and natural habitat in their communities. OWEB supports those efforts by providing funds from the Oregon Lottery.

No matter where you live in Oregon, your actions affect a watershed. Healthy watersheds are not only vital to clean water and healthy habitat for fish and wildlife, they are also vital to maintaining our quality of life and building a strong economy. Oregonians should be proud of Oregon's unique approach to enhancing and maintaining these watersheds. The work is done at the local level by citizens, landowners, and volunteers. This approach creates community and provides maximum value from public dollars. By working in partnership with local efforts, OWEB empowers watershed and habitat restoration and conservation across Oregon.

No one can predict the future. How the future will unfold is a complex interaction of numerous driving forces. OWEB must be adaptive and innovative to achieve ongoing success in the face of an uncertain future. With this in mind, OWEB created an ambitious strategic plan using input from partners, staff and board members.

The five goals and nine strategies that follow represent high priority strategic guidance to continue our work on behalf of Oregon citizens. The board and senior staff share an understanding that:

- 1) Oregonians hold a deep set of conservation values;
- 2) Building a high capacity local infrastructure to implement projects is essential;
- 3) Significant ongoing resources will be needed for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation;
- 4) Partnerships are essential to OWEB's work;
- 5) Monitoring and feedback will inform and improve our work; and
- 6) Outreach and education will increase public awareness and involvement.

OWEB is proud to be part of an ongoing Oregon conservation legacy. We invite your thoughts, comments, and support in the restoration and conservation of Oregon's natural resources.

Tom Byler
Executive Director

Diane Snyder
Board Co-chair

Daniel Heagerty
Board Co-Chair

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Oregon's Conservation Legacy

People have a deep and enduring connection to Oregon's natural environment—the cool and clean water of its rivers and lakes, the rich diversity of its fish and wildlife, and the inspiring beauty and variety of its landscapes. Generations of Native Americans have been sustained by the land's abundant natural resources. In the nineteenth century trappers, settlers, farmers, and ranchers made the arduous trek to Oregon attracted by the special qualities of Oregon's lands and waters. Oregonians continue to deepen their tie to the lands and waters on which they live, work, and play.

This collective care and appreciation for the state's natural places and working landscapes has created a strong and enduring legacy of conservation in Oregon. Looking back, Oregon's conservation legacy is embodied in milestone actions involving incentives for recycling (the bottle bill), protecting unique and special places for the public to enjoy (the beach bill), and the development of land use planning laws to protect important land uses and prevent unchecked urban sprawl.

The most recent expression of Oregon's conservation legacy has been quietly and effectively taking place in communities around the state for ten years. Local groups—primarily watershed councils (councils) and soil and water conservation districts (districts)—are engaging farmers, ranchers, foresters, and other landowners to voluntarily work with other partners to take actions on their properties that help restore and protect our natural environment. Together, these local, cooperative actions are writing the most recent chapter to Oregon's conservation legacy.

These actions are possible because Oregon voters decided in 1998 to dedicate Lottery Fund dollars to support grants for clean water and to improve and protect habitat for fish and wildlife. The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is the state agency responsible for administering these grants.

OWEB is a non-regulatory public investment board that employs a locally driven, collaborative conservation approach to watershed enhancement. OWEB solicits and awards grants to improve and protect watershed health and monitors project effectiveness so all partners can adaptively manage the resource. OWEB is led by a policy oversight board that represents state, tribal, and federal interests, as well as the public at large.

OWEB's grant programs support voluntary efforts that result in:

- Projects that restore and protect natural processes and functions of watersheds;
- A statewide network of councils, districts, and other local groups that develop and implement restoration projects;
- Citizen awareness of watershed issues and participation in restoration and protection actions;
- Strong and lasting partnerships to address complex natural resources issues; and
- Jobs and the purchase of goods and services in local communities.

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Mission and Vision

OWEB has been working from a mission statement created in 2001. This strategic plan aligns that mission statement with statutory language and expands the mission statement with a vision statement. The vision statement was developed from discussions between board members and management staff, input from staff and stakeholders, and OWEB's experience in implementing its mission over the past ten years.

Mission Statement

A mission statement is a brief description of an organization's fundamental purpose. OWEB's mission is:

To help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies.

Vision Statement

A vision statement articulates the dreams and hopes for an organization. OWEB's vision is:

OWEB is a leader in the conservation of Oregon's natural resources and enjoys strong public support for its contributions to community-based conservation, watershed health, and local economies.

The vision calls for healthy landscapes across Oregon capable of sustaining and enriching the state's biological diversity, ecosystems, fish and wildlife habitat, and agricultural, forest, and human communities.

Watersheds have three primary functions with regard to water. They capture, store, and release water. The entire watershed, ridgetop to ridgetop and headwaters to confluence, is essential to these processes. Floodplains of rivers are complex systems that evolved over time, shaped by the soils, topography, vegetation, and other natural forces. In addition to water-related functions, watersheds are also landscapes that provide fish and wildlife habitats essential to the natural functioning of entire ecosystems.

OWEB's vision will guide future decisions about programs and funding priorities. This vision requires:

- *Integrated investments in projects that emphasize protection and/or restoration of watershed processes and ecosystem functions required by Oregon's native fish and wildlife;*
- *A ridgetop to ridgetop and headwaters to confluence approach to achieving healthy watersheds;*
- *Dynamic river and floodplain systems that interact with physical and ecological processes;*
- *Water quality that supports Oregon's native fish and wildlife species and meets human needs;*
- *Involved community members including both public and private interests that build and sustain a watershed stewardship ethic;*
- *Use of science and experience to guide priorities, projects and assessments; and*
- *Monitoring to support adaptive management and effective investments.*

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Goals, Strategies, and Implementation Actions

The OWEB Board has established the following goals, strategies and actions in support of OWEB's vision. In order to effectively consider and implement the strategies and actions identified below, OWEB staff will develop work plans and realign staff workload to achieve vision-driven priorities. Measures of progress and success will be developed and aligned with currently required reporting measures.

Goals

OWEB's goals are to:

- Goal 1: Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through program and project investments that enhance watershed and ecosystem functions and processes and support community needs.**
- Goal 2: Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.**
- Goal 3: Provide information to help Oregonians understand the need for and engage in activities that support healthy watersheds.**
- Goal 4: Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.**
- Goal 5: Ensure efficient and accountable administration of all investments.**

These goals are further described below, including strategies and actions.

Strategies and Actions

Adaptive Investment

- Goal 1: Restore and sustain resilient ecosystems through program and project investments that enhance watershed and ecosystem functions and processes and support community needs.**

OWEB faces the challenge of funding a mix of programs and projects across the state with many partners to build a broad restoration and monitoring infrastructure. Population growth and climate change will affect communities around the state and the watershed processes and functions upon which those communities and fish and wildlife depend. These driving forces are significant and their impact is uncertain. The key to achieving OWEB's vision is an adaptive, principled, and well structured investment strategy that incorporates monitoring and evaluation into local project development and implementation. Monitoring information is the basis for adapting investment and management activities to achieve the most effective and resilient outcomes.

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Strategy 1: Maintain and enhance restoration and protection programs that focus on watershed and ecosystem functions and processes, support sustainable working landscapes, and empower community-based conservation to address economic, social and environmental health.

Where are we now?

OWEB has worked for ten years to restore and protect healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies. OWEB achieves this by working closely with local partners to provide watershed enhancement grants, providing funding to support the capacity of watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts, partnering with other agencies and organizations, monitoring and managing information, and reporting on implementation of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. OWEB's mission and work also support and complement governmental climate change policy and priorities through locally based, on-the-ground work to improve watershed health and resilience, which will become increasingly important to address the effects of climate change.

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Where are we going?

Action 1: Work with partners to update OWEB's Restoration and Acquisition Priorities and align them with the Oregon Conservation Strategy, species conservation and recovery plans, water quality management plans, local watershed assessments and climate change strategies as they emerge from international, national, state, and local sources.

Action 2: Periodically review and update the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to reflect changes in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation strategies and plan, or lessons learned from the monitoring and research program status review.

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Action 3: Board adopts final set of Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

Action 4: OWEB enhances access to, and knowledge of, adopted Restoration and Acquisition Priorities.

Action 5: OWEB enhances the grant application development and review processes to incorporate the Restoration and Acquisition Priorities to ensure projects are strategic and deliver watershed and ecological function and process outcomes consistent with the vision.

Action 6: Continue investment in the Willamette and Deschutes Special Investment Partnerships (SIPs) and work with partners to explore additional SIPs and other partnerships.

Action 7: Encourage and support programs that result in positive long-term economic outcomes for landowners while achieving watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

Strategy 2: Implement monitoring and research programs to build knowledge and strengthen feedback about OWEB investments and critical uncertainties to support adaptive management for outcome improvements.

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In 2003, the Board adopted a far-reaching and long-term strategy to guide coordinated monitoring efforts under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. From this strategy, OWEB initiated an effectiveness monitoring program in 2005. To date, effectiveness monitoring has been initiated on many of the top 25 restoration program areas funded cumulatively since 1999. These monitoring projects include detailed evaluations of riparian planting and fencing, fish barrier removal, irrigation efficiency, western juniper removal, dam removal, in-stream large wood placement, road removal and rehabilitation, wetland restoration, tide gate replacement, and others.

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The actions under Strategy 2 provide the building blocks for understanding the results of OWEB investments from the project level to the cumulative impact of all investments. The data collected through the implementation of this strategy will be assembled into information that will be shared under the Goal 3, Strategy 1, for the purpose of building awareness, success, and support for OWEB actions.

Where are we going?

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Action 1: Undertake a monitoring and research program status review to describe the lessons learned, the current use of data and analyses, and the actions needed to successfully implement this strategy.

Action 2: Implement the appropriate compliance and effectiveness monitoring in key investment areas and the remaining one third of OWEB's top restoration investment areas.

Action 3: Assemble data, information, lessons learned, and stories from effectiveness monitoring that will be used to implement Goal 3 to build awareness and understanding.

Action 4: Continue to work with partners through collaborative workgroups and by providing funding through grants to high priority monitoring activities.

Action 5: Continue to establish and maintain databases internally and through grants used to store, analyze, and provide the backbone of information delivery through electronic and traditional forms of communication.

Action 6: Revise OWEB Research Priorities to align with Board goals related to climate change, Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, and the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

Local infrastructure development

Goal 2: Support an enduring, high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

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Strategy 1: Establish and articulate policies related to the support and development of a diverse local infrastructure for watershed restoration.

Where are we now?

OWEB is exploring a diverse approach to building local infrastructure to support restoration and conservation. This includes watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts, and other nongovernmental organizations and landowners. Partnerships are encouraged to organize at a scale that can be sustained over the long term. OWEB continues to explore issues related to the number of councils and the best ways to manage and fund a high capacity infrastructure.

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Where are we going?

Action 1: Work with watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts, public and private foundations, tribes, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations to identify needs and funding partners to strengthen their ability to build capacity and develop a diverse and enduring local infrastructure.

Action 2: Identify and evaluate alternative organizational structures to achieve more stable local infrastructure.

Strategy 2: Evaluate and adjust watershed council support grant review and funding processes to build local capacity, provide base funding, and promote strategic partnerships.

Where are we now?

The legislature currently provides councils and districts with a base level of funding of \$5 million each, every two years. During the 2007-2009 biennium, OWEB supplemented this base funding with an additional \$1 million each. Councils and districts work to supplement OWEB's funding by seeking other funding such as foundation grants, memberships, donations, business contributions, and for some districts, local taxes. The level of support and resources varies based on the leadership, capacity, and geographic location of these organizations. OWEB recognizes that more support needs to be provided to help build sustainable local organizations to carry on watershed restoration work.

This strategy only addresses the support grants for watershed councils. Soil and water conservation district support funding is provided by OWEB through the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which runs its own distribution and accountability processes.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Develop funding policy guidelines for achieving sustainable council support.

Action 2: Develop policy guidance for the Board on council requests for solo funding ("splitting" from umbrella councils) for the 2011-2013 council support grant awards.

Action 3: Work with applicants, reviewers, and others to explore options regarding how OWEB funds councils, including looking at new applicant funding, base funding, partnership incentives, outcomes from OWEB funding, and other issues.

Strategy 3: Provide technical assistance to build capacity, secure additional funding and increase local organizational resilience.

Where are we now?

OWEB has provided funding to support capacity building for watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts through the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils (Network) and Oregon Association of Conservation Districts (OACD). OWEB's funding also supports coordination and cooperation between OACD and the Network to the benefit of councils, districts, and OWEB. The work of these organizations directly complements the funding for councils and districts and helps their respective groups perform at a high level and communicate their successes.

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Where are we going?

Action 1: Require specific capacity building products and expectations as deliverables for the funding provided to the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils and Oregon Association of Conservation Districts.

Action 2: Reserve non-capital funds to contract with one or more organizations to deliver additional capacity building services in 2009-2011.

Action 3: Continue working with partners and exploring possibilities to develop tools and strategies for ecosystem services market participation that may diversify revenue streams for local infrastructure, and leverage and diversify project and maintenance/monitoring funding.

Public Awareness and Involvement

Goal 3: Provide information to help Oregonians understand the need for and engage in activities that support healthy watersheds.

All Oregonians appreciate and recognize the value of clean, abundant water. Few Oregonians recognize that clean, abundant water depends on functioning watersheds. Still fewer Oregonians identify the critical link between investments in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation and clean, abundant water and healthy populations of fish and wildlife. It is important to expand the awareness that land and water management actions can improve and/or protect water quality. Healthy watersheds require an informed public that supports fish and wildlife habitat protection, well managed river corridors, agricultural and forest land stewardship and urban land and water management.

Strategy 1: Make Oregonians aware of the importance of healthy watersheds and inform them, in broad strokes, of what has been accomplished on their behalf through the work of OWEB and others.

Where are we now?

OWEB was created in 1999 and now has over a decade of projects and programs that illustrate the linkages between ecosystem health and community and economic sustainability. Every two years, OWEB develops a biennial report on the progress of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds that highlights implemented projects, local community efforts, and agency program accomplishments.

In early 2009, the Board recognized that OWEB would benefit from outside assistance to develop effective messages, identify key outreach tools, and develop a strategic communications implementation plan to promote public awareness and involvement in the agency's watershed enhancement program. A Strategic Communications Plan was presented to the Board in fall of 2009 to help guide agency efforts to produce useful and timely information about our programs, the people we work with, and our accomplishments in terms that are more accessible to the general public. For example, after ten years it is important to compile a history of investments and ecological outcomes to help the public understand the value received. The more people know about the public investments in watershed health and the benefits of those investments, the more they will value them and support continued funding of these efforts.

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Where are we going?

Action 1: Develop and implement simple, effective and strategic awareness messages, and messaging tools aligned with OWEB's strategic plan.

Action 2: Develop a range of tools for OWEB grant recipients to use to further the Strategy and implement Action 1.

Action 3: Coordinate and develop specific plans with other agencies and partners to deliver consistent messages.

Action 4: Compile a history of OWEB investments and ecological outcomes ("Decade of Investment") to increase awareness of the accomplishments of Oregonians to improve and protect watersheds.

Action 5: Review and enhance the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watershed Biennial Report to further the goals of the Strategic Plan and Strategic Communications Plan.

Action 6: Use the Strategic Communication Plan to guide outreach grant offerings.

Strategy 2: Encourage and facilitate greater exploration and knowledge for those Oregonians who seek greater involvement in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

Where are we now?

OWEB administers a competitive grant program that invests approximately \$1 million a biennium in watershed education and outreach grants across Oregon. In 2005, OWEB developed an Education and Outreach Strategy to connect and support OWEB's education and outreach functions and investments. The strategy included three elements that build upon each other: enhance awareness; improve knowledge; and develop skills.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Increase knowledge of effective education and engagement strategies, programs, and tools through detailed descriptions of projects from around the state through the OWEB website and at conferences.

Action 2: Build and support effective education efforts that increase Oregonian's knowledge and involvement in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

Action 3: Work with partners to develop and implement the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan ("No Child Left Inside").

Partnership development

Goal 4: Build and maintain strong partnerships with local, state, tribal, and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations and private landowners for watershed and habitat restoration and conservation.

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OWEB combines the regulatory and land management programs of state and federal agencies and local governments with voluntary watershed restoration by private landowners and others. Over the years, solutions to address water quality, watershed health, native salmon habitat, and wildlife conservation have been achieved by building partnerships between government agencies, tribes, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, land trusts, other nonprofit organizations, landowners, and citizens.

OWEB's grant based, non-regulatory program to improve watershed and habitat restoration and conservation requires a high level of coordination and collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies and organizations. OWEB funds can be leveraged and partners can help inform the public about the successful watershed and habitat restoration and conservation work underway. There is clearly opportunity to expand the nature of current partnerships and create new partnerships.

Strategy 1: Identify new and expand existing strategic partnerships that leverage OWEB funds and knowledge to achieve healthy watershed and community outcomes.

Where are we now?

Partnerships are a required element for all OWEB investments. Partnerships range from the matching funds for individual grants to institutional arrangements to implement federally developed programs. OWEB maintains a portfolio of investments with different kinds of partners and at different levels of formal relationships. Criteria for evaluating formal partnerships has been developed and adopted by the Board.

OWEB has successful partnerships with local watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, state and federal agencies, tribes, local government, land trusts, private foundations, and other nongovernmental organizations.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Executive Director and the Board partnership subcommittee will identify and prioritize partnership development on behalf of OWEB consistent with the vision and Board-adopted partnership criteria.

Action 2: OWEB key messages will be developed and shared with partners. Specific plans will be developed for distribution of messages.

Efficient and Accountable Administration

Goal 5: Ensure efficient and accountable administration of all investments.

OWEB's core function is the administration of a competitive grant program, which has experienced significant growth in the number of grants and funding award amounts over the past ten years. The timely, accurate, and transparent administration of all aspects of the program is an everyday activity for all employees. This approach benefits the agency and its partners by providing streamlined processes and necessary resources to carry out watershed and habitat restoration and conservation in an expeditious and responsible manner. OWEB will continue to

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focus on this important goal and continue to look for opportunities for advancement and improvement while balancing and supporting flexibility, innovation, and adaptive management.

Strategy 1: Continue to evaluate, explore and implement grant administrative processes to maintain and enhance efficiencies at all levels.

Where are we now?

OWEB is in constant communication with staff to determine the most efficient ways to carry out its business. A staff review is conducted following each grant cycle to develop recommended improvements. OWEB has begun to develop digital processes for the organization, including a grant administration system and online reporting. Staff members in other program areas are working with partners to improve agency processes in order to better facilitate on-the-ground actions.

In addition to internal processes, OWEB benefits from third party reviews of its work. OWEB's grant process, files, and expenditures are audited every other year by the Secretary of State and OWEB has received a favorable audit each time. OWEB also conducts an annual customer service survey that is reported to the Legislature as part of the agency's budget process.

Where are we going?

Action 1: Conduct an independent review of OWEB's business processes to identify ways to improve communications and streamline and simplify the processes for staff, applicants and grantees, without compromising accountability and legal requirements.

Action 2: Prioritize and implement business process recommendations.

Action 3: Explore options and develop information technology tools to increase efficiencies and meet the needs of stakeholders and staff.