



Oregon
Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360
Salem, OR 97301-1290
(503) 986-0178
FAX (503) 986-0199
www.oregon.gov/OWEB



January 4, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: **Tom Byler, Executive Director**
Greg Sieglitz, Monitoring and Reporting Program Manager
Carolyn Devine, Communications Coordinator
Melissa Leoni, Senior Policy Coordinator

SUBJECT: Agenda Item H: Strategic Plan Implementation
Public Awareness and Involvement
January 20-21, 2010 OWEB Board Meeting

I. Introduction

This report provides an update on implementation of immediate actions under Goal 3 of the Final Draft Strategic Plan. Agenda Item F reports more specifically about the implementation of actions under the other four goals.

II. Background

In January of 2009, OWEB contracted with Gard Communications to help develop messages and identify tools that could be used for strategic media and communications efforts to promote public awareness and involvement in the agency's watershed enhancement program. Gard undertook an initial discovery process that involved interviewing key stakeholders representing a variety of perspectives from every corner of the state, drafting messages, vetting the messages with a focus group, and developing recommendations on strategy and tactics associated with implementing a communications effort. The Gard team updated the Board on their efforts at the March and June meetings last year. The results of Gard's efforts were presented at the September 2009 Board meeting.

The OWEB Strategic Plan described in Agenda Item E was developed at the same time; the recommendations of the Strategic Communications Plan are incorporated into the public awareness and involvement goal (Goal 3) of the Strategic Plan. Based on public comments, Goal 3 has been revised in the final draft strategic plan, resulting in one new action under Strategy 1 and two new actions under Strategy 2.

In order to implement both plans, and to address the anticipated need to respond to information inquiries and questions from the public due to the Lottery Fund reauthorization initiative, staff proposed and the Board approved an allocation of \$400,000 in September of 2009 to carry out the necessary public awareness and involvement work and product development in an expedited manner.

The implementation status of each action under Goal 3 is shown in Attachment A to Agenda Item F. This staff report briefly describes the priority communications products and education efforts being implemented under the Strategic Plan and Strategic Communications Plan.

III. Communications Products

A. Messaging and PowerPoint Presentation

Staff have contracted with Gard Communications to further refine the messages and tools associated with the draft plans that will help OWEB build its information infrastructure. These messages will be used in future communications products. One product that will be produced in 2010 is a simple PowerPoint presentation that can be used for outreach presentations to local community groups that may not be familiar with OWEB and the work the agency funds.

B. Microsite and OWEB Web Site

OWEB's contract with Gard also includes the design and launch of a simple, compelling, and effective site (Microsite) that will be the centerpiece of OWEB's long-term communications efforts. With high-level messages and easy navigation, the objective of the Microsite is for visitors to gain an increased awareness of the accomplishments of the work that has been done by OWEB and others on behalf of all Oregonians. Staff plan to demonstrate the proposed Microsite at the Board meeting in anticipation of an early February launch of the site.

At the same time, OWEB staff have initiated work to update OWEB's current web site to eliminate redundancies and improve content delivery whenever possible. Out of date or confusing text is being updated or removed, new explanatory content is being added, and basic improvements are being planned to provide essential connectivity to the Microsite. Staff plan to complete many of these updates by the end of January 2010 and will report progress at the January Board meeting.

Once the initial clean up of OWEB's web site is complete, staff plan to launch a second phase of updating our online presence that will be implemented between February and the summer of 2010. Phase two will involve engaging an outside contractor to evaluate both web sites from a user's perspective to improve the delivery of information and content and integration of sites. The second phase will also include the development of additional content, including stories and web videos about OWEB-funded projects and ways to better show the cumulative results from OWEB's investments over the past ten years.

C. Agency Coordination

Over the next year, staff will engage in both ongoing and new efforts to coordinate with our sister agencies on communications, messaging, and reporting results from our collective investments in watershed and habitat restoration and conservation. Staff have developed a draft work plan to engage the Oregon Plan agencies over the spring and summer in developing consistent messages, stories, and results information to describe the achievements that have been made possible by the dedication of lottery and other funds over the past ten years. The results of this effort will inform updates to OWEB's web sites, the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds web site, and the content and format of the 2009-2011 Oregon Plan Biennial Report.

Staff are currently developing a reporting template for agencies to use that will inform further story and information development efforts. Some of the funding reserved by the Board at the September 2009 meeting for Oregon Plan Products may be used to accelerate agency efforts to discover, compile, and deliver priority program investment and accomplishment information if necessary.

D. OWEB Investments and Ecological Outcomes

As described in September, it is likely that the public may show more interest in OWEB and our programs over the next year than we have previously seen. It is essential that OWEB be able to provide meaningful information about its investments, programs, and activities. Staff are moving forward with the Strategic Communication Plan's recommendation to "create and enhance an ongoing information infrastructure" that can provide useful and timely information about our investments and the results.

To date, OWEB's main delivery vehicle for information about programs and accomplishments has been the Oregon Plan Biennial Report. While these reports have been quite comprehensive, they have been structured to provide an accounting of outputs related to funding and projects. Through the Strategic Planning development process, staff and the Board have discussed enhancing the Biennial Report to feature outcome-based messages.

With the recent developments in web site, mapping, and database technologies, a new era of information accessibility is emerging. Staff are exploring how to use these new tools to better communicate ecological outcomes and programmatic accomplishments to the public and our stakeholders. However, the migration to outcome-based reporting will be a significant adjustment and will require a large investment of staffing and other resources. Some of this may be achieved through partnerships with agencies as described in Section III.C. above. Other tasks may be accomplished through existing staffing or contracted services.

One challenge for OWEB will be to integrate our investments, outputs, and outcomes around common messages. However this also presents an exciting opportunity for OWEB to showcase the tremendous benefits of our investments to local communities and ecosystems. Linking results derived from effectiveness and other types of monitoring to specific OWEB project investments is a key method that staff plan to employ to portray progress made and outcomes achieved. In many cases, we will utilize a description of the trajectory we are on and targets we are trending towards, as opposed to describing specific end points that have been attained. This approach is important because it recognizes the realities of ecosystem restoration as a necessary long-term investment to overcome legacy perturbations. Similarly, many restoration actions require decades of maturity before their complete ecosystem benefits are fully realized.

Goal 3, Strategy 1, Action 4 in the OWEB Strategic Plan proposes a compilation of historic investments and outcomes. Staff do not view this as a single document or publication. Rather, this compilation would consist of the maps, stories, web site narratives, data, and information that are described above. Staff anticipate providing access to project and investment information primarily through our web site in a manner that would allow users to organize information by year, geography, grant type, fund source, grantee, project activity,

and others categories. Staff will present examples and mock-up versions on these concepts at the Board meeting.

IV. Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan

HB 2544, passed by the 2009 Oregon Legislature, establishes an 11-member Oregon Environmental Literacy Task Force charged with developing an Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan to integrate environmental education into the academic curriculum. This plan is required for Oregon to be eligible for federal grant monies that support K-12 teacher efforts to utilize the local environment as an extension of the classroom.

Goal 3, Strategy 2, Action 3 of the Strategic Plan calls for staff to work with partners on the development and implementation the Oregon Environmental Literacy Plan. The Task Force has been appointed and will begin more formal discussions the first week of January 2010. Staff will participate in these meetings.

V. Recommendation

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