

March 16-17, 2010 OWEB Board Meeting
Executive Director Update #C-7: Working Lands Conservation
Easements Contract

Background

OWEB staff have been working with the Board Acquisition Subcommittee on the question of how working lands conservation easements – those land conservation projects that include continued private ownership and economic use of a property – are evaluated for funding. OWEB’s current administrative rules focus on habitat, plant community, and species ecological priorities and whether applications meet one or more conservation principles to protect those priorities. In contrast, a number of working lands easement proponents have argued that protection from land division and intensification of use should be sufficient for OWEB funding.

As part of the strategic plan implementation effort, staff advertised for an independent contractor to analyze programs that fund “working lands” conservation easements and interview interested parties to seek opinions about what working lands easements can contribute to watershed and habitat restoration and conservation in Oregon. The purpose of the project is to compile policy and program information and stakeholder perspectives to help OWEB better determine how its funding can be used for working lands conservation easements that provide long-term economic benefits for landowners in a manner consistent with the Oregon Constitution and OWEB’s mission and statutes.

Working Lands CE

Four responses to the Request for Proposal were received for review. A staff review team was assisted by Bruce Taylor, Defenders of Wildlife, and Meta Loftsgaarden, Natural Resources Conservation Service, to evaluate the proposals. James Fox Ph.D. was selected to conduct the work. Dr. Fox has experience with the Washington Salmon Recovery Funding Board and extensive policy analysis and implementation experience to bring to the project. Staff have initiated contracting with Dr. Fox.

Next Steps

Staff and Dr. Fox anticipate reporting on the analysis and findings at the September 2010 or January 2011 meeting.

Staff Contact

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Ken Bierly, at ken.bierly@state.or.us or 503-986-0182.