



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



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Greg Sieglitz, Monitoring and Reporting Program Manager

SUBJECT: Agenda Item D: Dam Removal Monitoring
March 16-17, 2010 OWEB Board Meeting

I. Introduction

This report provides a summary and an update on the preliminary findings from recent dam removal projects in various basins in Oregon that OWEB has participated in through our effectiveness monitoring program.

II. Background

Dam removal has been a growing field of restoration science and implementation in recent years. As watershed restoration actions continue to grow in size and scope, dam removal has moved to the forefront of the field. Several small to medium sized dams have recently been removed in just the last three years in Oregon. These include Brownsville on the Calapooia River, Chiloquin Dam on the Sprague River, Marmot Dam on the Sandy River, and Gold Hill and Savage Rapids dams on the Rogue River. Over the next two years, Sodom and Shears dams on the Calapooia River and Gold Ray Dam on the Rogue River are scheduled for removal.

With this very active portfolio of dam removal actions in Oregon, coupled with a relatively young field of study and practice, significant opportunities are present to learn from these efforts to inform future work. The OWEB Board elected to take advantage of these opportunities and to play an active role in providing funding to those experts that plan for and study dam removal projects. In September of 2007, the Board funded effectiveness monitoring of the Calapooia River dam removal projects; in 2008 funding was provided for Marmot dam removal studies; and in 2009 dam removal monitoring was supported for the Savage Rapids and Gold Ray dam removals.

III. Discussion

Oregon State University, through its Biological and Ecological Engineering Department, has been a leader in studying dam removal around the Pacific Northwest and elsewhere. Through the combined efforts supported by OWEB and others, new and exciting findings are emerging in this budding field of restoration and study.

As OWEB continues to organize and describe information about restoration project accomplishments and outcomes through its Strategic Plan and communications efforts, projects that are of high dollar value, have a strong social recognition, and potentially provide immediate and clear ecological results should be candidates for demonstrating the return on our investments. In many cases, dam removal projects fit these criteria. The response of rivers, by the fish that inhabit them and the sediment and other material that is transported by them, are proving to be rapid and definitive in many cases. While information is preliminary for many of the projects identified above, there has been a great deal learned in just the last two field seasons. At the March meeting, Dr. Desiree Tullos will brief the Board on the early findings from recent dam removal projects and discuss where some critical uncertainties and needs still exist in offering a strategic approach to future dam removal evaluation. Dr. Tullos has worked on effectiveness monitoring associated with the removal of five dams in Oregon and two outside of the state.

IV. Recommendation

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