



Oregon

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Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Tom Byler, Executive Director
Carolyn Devine, Communications Coordinator
Melissa Leoni, Senior Policy Coordinator

SUBJECT: Agenda Item K: Communications Products
March 16-17, 2010 OWEB Board Meeting

I. Introduction

This report provides an update on development of OWEB communications products under the Strategic Plan and Communications Plan.

II. Background

Since the September 2009 Board meeting staff have moved forward on a number of key action items from the Draft Communications Implementation Plan and Board adopted Strategic Plan. At that meeting, staff proposed and the Board approved funding to carry out the necessary work and product development in an expedited manner.

At the January 2010 Board meeting, staff presented drafts of the new Portal Web site (formerly called the Microsite) and updates to the OWEB agency web site, and discussed the beginnings of efforts to better communicate ecological outcomes and programmatic accomplishments to the public and our stakeholders.

III. Communications Products

The following sections briefly describe recent developments related to the priority communications products and education efforts being implemented under the Strategic Plan and Draft Strategic Communications Plan.

A. Portal Site and OWEB Web Site

OWEB's contract with Gard also includes the design and launch of a simple, compelling, and effective portal site (formerly called the "Microsite") that will be the centerpiece of OWEB's long-term communications efforts. The portal site, www.healthywatersheds.org, will be launched soon, with new stories and functionalities added over the next year. Staff will demonstrate the latest portal site at the March meeting.

OWEB has launched the first phase of efforts to update OWEB's current web site to eliminate redundancies and improve content delivery, consistent with the Board discussion in January. Notices were posted on the site and OWEB staff will be communicating with its stakeholders about the improvements and portal site launch over the coming month.

Staff are moving forward with the second phase of updating our online presence. Staff are preparing a Request for Proposals to engage 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. Staff are also continuing to identify and develop 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.

B. Messaging and PowerPoint Presentation

An important part of OWEB's mission is to build public awareness of and involvement in watershed restoration efforts around the state. Staff have contracted with Gard Communications to further refine messages and tools to help OWEB improve its communication infrastructure. These messages are being used now and will be used in future communications products. Over the coming months, staff will work with grantees and stakeholders to start utilizing these messages as a part of local outreach efforts. Staff are also looking into organizing a series of meetings this summer with local partners around the state to build awareness about and get feedback on the message language and outreach tools, and to explore how OWEB can best help local groups with outreach goals to build community awareness and involvement in their work. Another 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. The presentation will be available for use this summer.

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 will engage the Oregon Plan agencies over the spring and summer in developing consistent messages, stories, and 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 (as described in Agenda Item C, Executive Director Update #C-4). Director Byler has contacted the Governor's office and natural resource agency directors to begin engaging those agencies in story and information development efforts. Staff will update the Board on progress throughout the year.

D. Social Media

Staff are aware of the increasing value of such social media web sites as a communications tool and are considering whether to join one or several of the available social media web sites in the future. Staff are being mindful of the time commitment and risks of participating on social media web sites, particularly for state agencies. The guidelines developed by the Department of Administrative Services for agency use of websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have recently been released. In addition, OWEB still needs to

consider many factors, including what the specific goals and purposes of the use would be, which sites to engage on, the degree of our interactivity, the frequency and content of posts, and guidelines for removing inappropriate discussions, maintaining public records, and information security. Staff will keep the Board apprised of our evaluation of social media as an OWEB communication tool.

E. Other Communications Efforts

In light of the possible November 2010 ballot measure to renew the Parks and Natural Resources Fund, it is possible that the public and media will show more interest this year in the agencies and programs supported with the dedicated lottery funds than has been seen in the past. With this in mind, OWEB is preparing for information requests about our program and the projects we fund. We are working internally and with the other agencies, as described in Section III.C. above, to develop and coordinate useful information about our collective efforts. OWEB is also arranging for customer service and communications training for all OWEB staff.

IV. Recommendation

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