

Salem Session Overview – May 31, 2012

Note: the following information is offered for the Board to consider as it develops its Long Term Investment Strategy.

Long-Term Investment Strategy Comments

Many Salem participants encouraged OWEB to develop landscape strategies that focus on high priority resources and geographic areas. They suggested that strategies should support other approaches such as the Oregon Conservation Strategy, threatened and endangered species recovery plans, and the Integrated Water Resources Strategy. The strategies should protect ecological systems across uplands, riparian, and stream systems and address limiting factors. Some also recommended that OWEB do more to create strategic partnerships and networks for conservation, funding, and building social capital.

OWEB's grant programs should clearly describe high priority resources and geographic areas. Expectations for quantifiable outcomes should be described and should allow flexibility to local watersheds for project design. Longer-term grants should be an option. Such grants would allow for planning, technical and operational assistance, and flexibility for allocating funds where needed to achieve the quantifiable outcomes.

Numerous comments recommended that OWEB invest in building and maintaining capacity for watershed councils, SWCDs and other local organizations to enable them to handle a range of watershed issues consistent with OWEB's mission. OWEB assistance setting up networks for sharing technical expertise and other key services is also needed.

Many participants stated that education should be a focal point for OWEB. The general population, students, and local watersheds and communities are target audiences. OWEB should provide and support the development of educational packages and materials in a variety of formats for classroom and field applications.

Additional Advice

Several commenters asked OWEB to identify and provide incentives for participation in watershed protection. People also recommended funding for innovative approaches, maintenance of existing investments, and emergency work that arises between grant cycles. Other recommendations stress that it is important for OWEB to promote collaboration among local organizations engaged in watershed protection. To model this, OWEB itself should collaborate with partner organizations to examine priorities and opportunities to leverage funding and resource protection.

Wrap-Up

OWEB Director Tom Byler and board members Mike Haske, Debbie Hollen and Morgan Rider observed that participants believe more focus at the landscape scale is important but that it is also important to not lose sight of OWEB's grass roots heritage. Strategic and prioritized investments supported by an effective monitoring program were frequent points of emphasis. It was important to many that OWEB maintain the programs that have been successful and the investments that have been made. Also, grant programs need to be efficient and effective and a more holistic approach to grants is desired. Such grants could support project planning, technical support, and maintenance over longer time horizons. Finally and importantly: keep local organizations sustainable and strong.