Photo: Susan Douthit, OWRD

Feasibility Study Grant Program

HELPING OREGON COMMUNITIES EVALUATE WATER RESOURCES PROJECTS

OUR MISSION

To serve the public by practicing and promoting responsible water management through two key goals:

(1) to directly address Oregon's water supply needs, and

(2) to restore and protect streamflows and watersheds in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of Oregon's ecosystems, economy, and quality of life.

Background

Development of water projects can be time-consuming, complicated, and expensive. The early planning stages often qualify for grant funding, while construction and implementation phases often have access to bonds or other capital. Often missing, however, is the ability to fund feasibility studies, allowing communities to determine the environmental, engineering, economic, and social implications of proposed water supply projects.

The Water Resources Department is requesting continued funding for its Feasibility Study Grant Program. The Water Conservation, Reuse and Storage Grant Program, established by Senate Bill 1069 (2008), is designed to fund the qualifying costs of planning studies that evaluate the feasibility of developing water conservation, reuse, or storage projects. Results of the Program range from direct implementation of projects to phased programs carried out over a period of years. Some projects are self-funded and others have been awarded additional implementation grants or loans by state, federal, or other partners.

2008-2009 Grantees

During 2008 and 2009, the Program awarded 21 grants statewide for a total of close to $1.4 million. The grant awards covered a broad geographic area and ranged from approximately $10,000 to $260,000 each. Grant funds supported six surface water storage studies, three groundwater storage studies, six water reuse studies and nine water conservation studies.

Examples of Recent Feasibility Studies

Grande Ronde Model Watershed

The feasibility study considered whether artificial recharge and aquifer storage options are available in the upper Grande Ronde Valley. The goals were to determine feasible ways to augment late season streamflows and to help mitigate declining groundwater tables in the upper Grande Ronde Valley. The study recommended that a recharge and recovery project would have a high likelihood of success with significant benefits to streamflow during critical times of the year. Implementation discussions are underway with financing from the U.S. Bonneville Power Administration.

City of Hillsboro/City of Beaverton

The study provided an estimate of potential water savings that could be achieved through the implementation of six variations of a WaterSense® Rebate Program. This study assisted in program and policy revisions aimed at reducing the overall per capita demand on the water system. The study helped facilitate greater water conservation efforts. The City of Beaverton now has a rebate program in place for customers to purchase water-efficient clothes washers.

2012 Grantees

In 2012, the Water Resources Commission awarded 18 grants totaling approximately $1.1 million. Grant agreements were developed and work is now nearing completion.

Feasibility studies are important for determining various aspects of water supply projects. As recommended in Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy (Recommended Action 13.C.), Oregon should commit to helping local communities bridge the funding gap by continuing to provide modest grants for evaluating the feasibility of water conservation, storage, and reuse projects.

Contact

Nancy Pustis, Grant Program Specialist
Oregon Water Resources Department
503-986-0919
nancy.n.pustis@wrd.state.or.us
www.wrd.state.or.us

2012 Grant Awards

Conservation

$11,485	Central Oregon Irrigation District
$50,000	Deschutes River Conservancy
$15,350	Jefferson County SWCD
$49,830	Lane Council of Governments
$100,000	Medford Water Commission
$34,020	Umatilla Watershed Council
$243,000	Talent Irrigation District

Storage

$71,665	East Valley Water District
$11,405	Fessler Nursery
$56,000	Grande Ronde Model Watershed
$250,000	Hood River County
$6,200	La Creole Orchards
$50,000	Polk County
$16,500	Tri Cities Water & Sanitary Authority

Reuse

$40,000	City of Corvallis
$30,000	City of Dundee
$21,210	City of Sisters
$49,500	Eugene/Springfield Metropolitan-Wastewater Management Commission

Project Highlight: From Studies to Implementation

Central Oregon Irrigation District used a 2008 Grant Award to assess the feasibility of lining or piping a section of its I-Lateral canal, which serves approximately 1,700 acres in Alfalfa, Oregon. This water conservation study determined it was cost effective to pipe or line a 1.5 mile section of the I-Lateral. It is estimated that up to 4.5 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water could be conserved, of which at least 2.25 cfs could be permanently converted to instream water rights in the Deschutes River through use of the Allocation of Conserved Water Program. Construction recently began on this water conservation project. The District hired a local pipe supply company and brought on temporary staff, as well as contracted services with a neighboring irrigation district, bringing economic benefits to Central Oregon.

"We really see this program as a great asset to Oregon."

~ Laura Wollam, Water Use Specialist, Central Oregon Irrigation District

Photo: L. Wollam, COID