
OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

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Oregon Water Resources Department
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SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

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OREGON WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is doing business with an eye to the triple bottom line – economy, community, and environment. It means using, developing, and protecting resources in a manner that enables people to meet current needs, and it provides that future generations can also meet future needs.

Water is the lifeblood of Oregon’s economy and environment. It makes sense that the Water Resources Department (WRD) would assume a leadership role in furthering the sustainability goals of our state. This *Sustainability Plan* lays the foundation for providing that leadership and to view our mission and goals in the context of sustainability. That is, sustainability as a fundamental part of what we do, rather than a stand-alone concept.

This *Sustainability Plan* identifies actions that our agency will undertake over the next year to further our state’s sustainability goals. Some of these actions build on efforts that are currently underway while others represent new actions to advance our sustainability vision and objectives.

COMMUNICATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Our Deputy Director, Phil Ward, will lead our agency’s efforts as our sustainability coordinator. Our division administrators will plan and implement sustainability projects related to resource management. We will also create a Sustainability Team to implement internally-oriented sustainability projects (e.g., facilities and operations, regulatory streamlining, and outreach and education). This team will be composed of managers and other staff who would like to take a leadership role in moving our agency toward its sustainability goals. The following table summarizes the managers and staff responsible for carrying out our sustainability initiative:

Name	Position	Areas of Responsibility
Phil Ward	Deputy Directory/Sustainability Coordinator	Sustainability Plan Oversight
Dick Bailey	Water Rights & Adjudication Division Administrator	Resource Management Actions
Tom Paul	Field Services Administrator	Resource Management Actions
Barry Norris	Technical Services Administrator	Resource Management Actions
Sustainability Team	To Be Determined	Facility & Operations Actions
Debbie Colbert	Water Policy Analyst	Sustainability Planning

CHALLENGES

Of all of the earth's natural resources, few people would disagree that water is of critical importance and essential to life itself. The use of water is key to many economic development and environmental quality activities in Oregon. The use of water allows for irrigated agriculture. Growing communities depend on reliable water supplies to meet their future needs. Water contributes to economic growth when used for hydroelectric power generation, navigation, and industrial and commercial purposes. Water also provides the streamflows, lakes, and reservoirs necessary to support fish and wildlife, boating, scenic attractions, and related recreation and tourism industries.

The Oregon Progress Board's State of the Environment Report (2000) noted that one of the state's major environmental challenges is inadequate water supply. Our challenge is to ensure sufficient water supplies to meet existing and future beneficial uses of water. However, there are significant barriers to achieving and maintaining sustainable water supplies:

- Surface waters in most of Oregon during non-winter months are fully appropriated or otherwise limited to existing out-of-stream and instream uses. This means that our agency has limited ability to issue new water rights or reallocate existing uses.
- Ground water resources are becoming fully tapped in many areas, and there is an increasing awareness of the hydraulic connection between ground water and surface water in many locations. This means our agency must collect data to better understand the impact of ground water use on surface water resources and consider those impacts when allocating ground water resources.
- Conflicts between instream and out-of-stream needs, exacerbated by listings of aquatic species under the Endangered Species Act, have become increasingly divisive and expensive to resolve.
- Trends in temperature and snow pack data indicate regional warming. These trends have significant implications for water supply, storage, and use in the Northwest, where snowmelt provides much of the water used during summer months. This could result in less water available to meet existing and future out-of-stream uses of water and to meet instream water needs for fish and other aquatic species.

VISION

As we seek lasting solutions to the growing and competing demands for Oregon's water, our overarching goal must be to create balance and sustainability. In this respect, "balance" will be evidenced by a healthy natural environment as well as vibrant local economies. Our natural resource related industries, communities, and cultures must be sustainable and profitable in both the short and long run. Likewise, our resource management programs must contribute positively to watershed health, species recovery, and tribal trust obligations. Key to achieving these outcomes is finding practical, common sense ways to balance the economic and cultural needs of our communities with the biological needs of our natural resource endowment.

Vision

Assure sufficient and sustainable water supplies are available to meet current and future needs.

How are we going to accomplish this vision?

Promote wise long-term water management,
Provide for streamflow restoration,
Address Oregon's water supply needs, and
Assure we do business in a way that
minimizes our impact on the environment.

SUSTAINABILITY ACTIONS

Over the next year, our agency will focus its initial sustainability actions in four broad categories:

- 1) Facilities and Operations,
- 2) Resource Management
- 3) Education and Outreach
- 4) Regulatory Streamlining

Under each of these categories, we have identified specific actions that are currently underway or that will be initiated over the next year. Future sustainability plans will evaluate our success at accomplishing these tasks, identify actions to build upon prior efforts, and incorporate new actions for achieving balance and sustainability. While this Sustainability Plan is fully compatible with the Department's current *Strategic Plan* (WRD Strategic Outlook, January 2003), it is the Department's intent to incorporate sustainability as a cornerstone of our strategic planning process for the 05-07 biennium. Because this process drives our legislative concept development, rulemaking, and budget development, sustainability will by necessity be fully integrated into the core agency planning processes.

The actions that are underway are included for information and are not intended to meet the request of the Governor's Executive Order to develop at least three new actions that WRD will implement. Some of the items listed below are a mix of actions underway and new actions. In these instances, new and underway actions are indicated in parentheses after targets.

Facilities and Operations

<p>Goal: Reduce our agency's impact on the environment.</p>	<p>New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Currently Underway <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Link to Sustainability? Our agency headquarters has relocated to a building specifically designed to model a sustainable office environment. Among other things, this building features enhanced natural lighting, a highly efficient heating and cooling system, storm water capture and reuse, and electric vehicle parking. We would like to transplant these concepts to our regional offices.</p>		
<p>Action: Over the next year, we will query our field offices to identify ongoing sustainable office practices and opportunities to improve our practices. We will quantify energy costs and paper use at each regional office and then identify and implement two actions at each regional office to reduce energy and paper use.</p>		
<p>Target:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do not have sufficient data to set performance measures for reductions in energy and paper use. We will quantify current energy and paper use at each regional office, set goals for reducing our use based on that information, and monitor changes in use over the next year. Our tentative target is to reduce energy and paper use overall at regional offices by 5% and 10%, respectively, by the end of 2004. This initial goal will be updated and long-term goals set after we have quantified current use. 		
<p>Potential Agency Partners: Department of Administrative Services (DAS), Department of Energy</p>		

Facilities and Operations

<p>Goal: Reduce our agency’s impact on the environment.</p>	<p>New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Currently Underway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Link to Sustainability? Our Department continues to look for ways to reduce waste and cut operational costs. One approach is to switch to email and website notification instead of individual paper mailings. Our Department has recently begun posting Water Resources Commission agendas, meeting minutes, and staff reports on the Commission’s website and providing automatic email notification of new postings. The Department has also switched its weekly public notice of applications, rulemaking notices, and proposed rules to a web-based email notification system. These efforts will result in reductions in waste materials and operating costs.</p>		
<p>Action: We will continue to look for ways to move to web-based, rather than paper notifications. Over the next year, we will also implement new paper-saving practices wherever possible. For example, we will conduct an internal training on using electronic faxing software. We will also examine whether our printers allow us to use double-sided printing as the default setting and will implement this if the printers can accommodate it. We will encourage staff to use duplexing printers by describing their locations in the building.</p>		
<p>Target over the next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 100% of public notices, Commission and committee agendas and minutes, staff reports, and rulemaking notices via a web-based option. (<i>currently underway</i>) • 25% increase in the use of electronic faxing. (<i>new action</i>) • 100% increase in the use of duplex printing on all printers that can print double-sided. (<i>new action</i>) 		
<p>Potential Agency Partners: DAS</p>		

Resource Management

<p>Goal: Manage new ground water withdrawals in the Deschutes River Basin in a sustainable manner.</p>	<p>New</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Currently Underway</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Link to Sustainability? In September 2002, the Water Resources Commission established by rule a mitigation credit and banking system in the Deschutes Basin that recognizes the hydraulic connection between surface water and ground water. The Deschutes Ground Water Mitigation Program is based on the sustainable concept that new ground water uses must be offset through streamflow mitigation. The program is making it possible to accommodate new ground water demands associated with growth while protecting scenic waterway flows and senior water rights, and restoring streamflows in the Middle Deschutes River.</p>		
<p>Action: This program is still in its infancy and, to date, only one new ground water permit has been issued with approved mitigation. Approximately 70 applications for ground water permits are pending.</p> <p>To ensure that this program is successful, our Department must help applicants clearly understand the mitigation requirements and ensure that adequate mitigation credits are available to offset new ground water withdrawals. To accomplish these goals, we will develop fact sheets for our website that will help applicants better understand the program. We will also expedite processing mitigation project applications to help “jump start” the mitigation bank.</p>		
<p>Target over the next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish 125 mitigation credits. (<i>new action</i>) • Scenic waterway flows and instream water right flows continue to be met on at least an equivalent or more frequent basis as compared to the long-term representative base period flows. (<i>currently underway</i>) 		
<p>Agency Partners: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), Oregon Parks & Recreation Department (OPRD), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Division of State Lands (DSL)</p>		

Resource Management

<p>Goal: Promote long-term water supply planning, water use efficiency, and conservation.</p>	<p>New <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Currently Underway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Link to Sustainability? In 1990, the Water Resources Commission adopted a statewide policy on conservation and efficient water use (OAR 690-410-0060). More recently, the Water Resources Commission adopted water right permit extension rules for holders of municipal and quasi-municipal permits that provide for long-term water supply planning. Similarly, our Commission has rules describing the submission and review of agricultural water suppliers water management and conservation plans. These rules provide a process to ensure the efficient use of the state’s water resources and to facilitate water supply planning.</p>		
<p>Action: Given the new municipal water right extension rules, the Department expects some 150 water management and conservation plans to be submitted by water suppliers over the next few years. The Department will expeditiously review these plans to provide guidance and encourage water use efficiency and water supply planning. The Department will also partner with the Oregon Water Resources Congress to develop resources for use by irrigation districts for conservation planning.</p>		
<p>Target over the next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue a preliminary review within 90 days of receiving a water management and conservation plan. 		
<p>Potential Agency Partners: Oregon Economic and Community Development Department (OECDD); Department of Human Resources Health Division; Department of Land, Conservation, and Development (DLCD)</p>		

Resource Management

Goal: Sustainable ground water – surface water management.	New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Currently Underway <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Link to Sustainability? The general statutory policy with respect to ground water management is to maintain ground water resources as stable and renewable water supplies, promote efficient use to maximize beneficial uses, and protect hydraulically connected surface water sources.</p> <p>As surface water supplies have become fully allocated across the state, ground water is becoming an increasingly important source for meeting new water needs. For this reason, it is becoming increasingly important that our agency consider long-term and cumulative effects of new ground uses on surface water. To do so, we must first determine whether a hydraulic connection exists with a surface water body. Hydraulic connection means that water can move between a surface water source and an adjacent ground water aquifer. Making this determination is complicated since aquifers can be confined, semi-confined, or unconfined and, therefore, ground water can be hydraulically connected over varying degrees to surface water. This has important implications on our ability to consider long-term and cumulative effects of new ground water appropriations.</p>		
<p>Action: Following the issuance of Governor’s Executive Order on sustainability, our Department convened a subcommittee of the Commission’s Ground Water Advisory Committee (GWAC) to develop policy direction relating to long-term and cumulative effects of new ground water rights on hydraulically connected surface water sources.</p>		
<p>Target over the next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and submit policy recommendations to GWAC.		
<p>Agency Partners: ODFW, OPRD, DEQ</p>		

Resource Management

Goal: Implement voluntary streamflow restoration to meet instream flow needs.	New <input type="checkbox"/>	Currently Underway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Link to Sustainability? Insufficient streamflows continue to pose a challenge for listed fish stocks and water users alike. Stabilizing or enhancing instream flows for fish are critical to addressing this challenge and to supporting sustainable fish populations. The Department implements voluntary streamflow restoration through water use efficiency and conservation programs, water right leases and transfers, and other incentive-based programs.		
Action: While we have made strides at returning water instream, the Department will continue to look for ways to implement its voluntary streamflow restoration tools and to build partnerships with water users and other interests.		
Target over the next year: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Last year, 13% of the watersheds that need water for fish had some amount of flow restoration. Over the next year, our goal is to put water instream in at least 18% of the watersheds that need flow restoration for fish through our voluntary and incentive-based programs.		
Agency Partners: ODFW, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB), OPRD, DEQ		

Resource Management

<p>Goal: Anticipate the possible effect of global warming on long-term water supplies.</p>	<p>New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Currently Underway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Link to Sustainability? Over the last decade, global warming has been the center of considerable discussion and investigation. Most agree that the warming trend, if prolonged, will result in profound changes in climate, including snowpack and precipitation levels. These trends have significant implications for water supply and use in the Northwest.</p>		
<p>Action: Our Commission will initiate a dialog among scientists, government agencies, and stakeholders regarding global warming and its implications for water supply in the Northwest, building on previous Department staff contacts and conferences. Our agency will also actively participate in the Governor’s Agency Work Group on Climate Change.</p> <p>To help us prepare for potential global warming impacts, our agency will continue to implement the Commission’s water measurement and reporting strategy. The strategy for increasing measurement statewide has been to focus limited staff on the largest diversions and diversions with the greatest potential impact on streams. Over the last several years, we completed an inventory of significant surface water diversions. Our field staff are now completing assessments of these diversions. During this assessment, field staff examine each diversion to ensure that water is used within the limits and conditions of the associated water right (e.g., fish screening, fish passage, measurement conditions) and to require water use measurement where appropriate.</p> <p>Given possible impacts of global warming on snowmelt, precipitation, and water demand, there is a pressing need to identify opportunities to augment water supply. Storage of surface water in the ground or behind dams can provide a water supply option to appropriate water during the wet times of the year for use during the dry times. Over the next year, we will pursue funding to complete a comprehensive inventory of potential surface water storage sites in Oregon. Changes in snowmelt and precipitation have implications for both water supply and demand. This action addresses water supply options and complements other sustainability actions addressing water conservation (e.g., page 10 – municipal water conservation).</p>		
<p>Target over the next year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Commission work session(s) devoted to global warming and water supply in the Northwest. <i>(new action)</i> • Complete field assessment of 50% of the significant diversions inventoried. <i>(currently underway)</i> • Seek \$100,000 in federal funds or other sources to complete an inventory of potential surface water storage sites. <i>(new action)</i> 		
<p>Agency Partners: DEQ, Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture</p>		

Outreach and Education

Goal: Increase the public’s understanding of sustainable practices.	New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Currently Underway <input type="checkbox"/>
Link to Sustainability? Public support will be essential to moving toward a sustainable Oregon. Through our daily interactions with the public, state agencies have an opportunity to increase the public’s understanding of sustainability concepts.		
Action: To increase the public’s understanding of sustainable practices, the Department will create a display in the entry of our new building, highlighting sustainable features of the building’s design and describing our agency’s other sustainability efforts.		
Target over the next year: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with North Mall Office Building agencies to create sustainability display for the lobby of the building.		
Potential Agency Partners: Oregon Housing & Community Services (OHCS); OPRD; DAS		

Outreach and Education

Goal: Increase staff awareness of sustainability.	New <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Currently Underway <input type="checkbox"/>
Link to Sustainability? Educating our staff on sustainability is key to changing our agency's impact on the environment, community, and economy. Staff are also a valuable source of new ideas so helping them understand sustainability will allow us to tap into their enthusiasm and creativity. The more our staff are involved in our sustainability efforts, the better chance we will have of meeting our sustainability goals.		
Action: We will plan several events to educate our managers and staff about sustainability. We will also create a Sustainability Team to oversee and track progress on internally-oriented sustainability projects. Our internal Sustainability Team will also help us identify new ideas for moving our agency toward more sustainable practices and will keep sustainability an ever-present issue within the Department through regular All-Staff meeting reports and other events. We will also incorporate regular reporting on sustainability activities into our Director's quarterly written reports to the Water Resources Commission.		
Target over the next year: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct a sustainability training for our Management Team.• Implement a regular agenda item on sustainability at All-Staff meetings and invite sustainability speakers to All-Staff meetings.• Provide four updates to our Commission on our sustainability activities over the next year.		

Regulatory Streamlining

Goal: Streamline regulations and regulatory processes.	New <input type="checkbox"/>	Currently Underway <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Link to Sustainability? Regulatory streamlining is essential to encouraging economic investment and opportunity in Oregon. The Department has worked hard in recent years to establish a culture of regulatory streamlining. Stakeholder input has resulted in numerous Department commitments and actions, including the use of technology to expedite regulatory processes, the development of easy-to-understand information and regulations (forms, orders, letters, and rules), and a flexible, problem-solving approach to regulatory matters.		
Action: Over the next six months, the Department will have each programmatic subdivision of the agency review their regulations and regulatory processes. Each section will be asked to identify streamlining and customer service improvement opportunities and to specifically identify one streamlining activity that will produce tangible benefits to our customers and stakeholders.		
Target over the next year: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initiate four new regulatory streamlining initiatives.		
Potential Agency Partners: Office of Regulatory Streamlining		

CROSS-AGENCY OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the actions identified above, our agency will be working closely with other state agencies to aid their sustainability efforts, including the following:

- ODFW Statewide Conservation Plan
- DEQ Global Change Work Group
- DSL Removal and Fill Permitting Work Group
- DEQ Waste Water Reuse Initiative

CONCLUSION

In these times of scarce resources, establishing a culture of *Sustainability* can provide the roadmap for successfully negotiating the challenging landscape ahead. Whether it's balancing competing resource needs through our regulatory authorities, or simply finding new ways to get things done in times of fiscal scarcity, operating in a sustainable manner will be a necessity rather than an option in the years to come.

Through the goals and actions in our *Sustainability Plan*, our agency will help lead the state's sustainability efforts. As we move forward under this plan and learn from our experiences and those of others, we will continue to fine-tune and elaborate on the actions identified herein to reflect our long-term cultural commitment to sustainability.