

## May 16-17, 2006 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #3: OWEB Communications

### **Background**

The Board adopted its Education and Outreach Strategy in May 2005. The purpose of the Strategy is to help the Board and OWEB staff to identify priorities and the best way to invest in those priorities. The Strategy focuses on three key elements: awareness, improve knowledge, and skill development. The awareness element of the Strategy aims to motivate interest and inform Oregonians about the significance of watersheds in their everyday lives, the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds, OWEB investments in local communities, and the important role watershed groups play in their communities.

With limited non-capital funds available at the outset of the 2005-2007 biennium, staff recommended the Board implement the awareness element of the Strategy through an allocation of non-capital funds to OWEB to support an in-house staff person. The Governor's Requested Budget for 2005-2007 sought a position for this purpose, but the position was ultimately not funded in OWEB's final budget. In September 2005, the Board approved funding for OWEB to support an in-house staff person to implement the awareness element of the Strategy. In February 2006, OWEB hired a part-time, temporary communications coordinator to focus on key outreach and communications needs.

### **Communications Activities**

The primary outreach and communications activities have included:

#### News Release Development and Distribution

A system has been established for OWEB staff and watershed councils to send news releases to news media in specific geographic regions or statewide electronically. The system was used to distribute news releases following the March Board meeting. (One of the news releases triggered a lead editorial in the Klamath Falls newspaper.) A few watershed councils have used the system successfully as well.

#### Email List Creation

Staff members are creating an email list to enable OWEB to communicate directly with key constituents and people requesting periodic updates. Agency staff are building the list of key constituents. People attending OWEB meetings or visiting the website will be able to sign themselves up for the list. People on this list will receive:

1. Alerts with links to significant news releases posted on the website.
2. A short message from OWEB's executive director every six months providing an update on issues and links to pertinent documents for more information.

#### Salmon License Plate Sales Promotion

Staff are distributing 50,000 copies of a card promoting salmon license plate sales that can be displayed in brochure racks or inserted into mailings (copies will be available at the Board meeting). We have asked state agencies, watershed councils, soil and water conservation districts, and other partner organizations to place the cards in display racks, to distribute to employees, and to insert the cards into mailings. Staff will next explore partnerships with retail outlets such as sporting goods stores and automobile dealers. If Board members would

like a supply for distribution to contacts and organizations, notify Maribeth Mattson at 503-986-0202. The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department also purchased 50,000 copies and is distributing them primarily in campsite reservation confirmations for Oregon residents.

#### Oregon Plan Outreach Team Activities

1. The annual Oregon Plan Oregonians Working for Healthy Watersheds awards recognition this year will consist of a congratulatory letter signed by the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Senate President. Award recipients will be featured on the Oregon Plan website and in a booklet that will be distributed to award recipients and others.
2. Team members participated in the Clean Water Festival held in Portland April 13, 2006. More than 1,000 elementary students from throughout the Willamette Valley, the Portland Metropolitan area, and northwest Oregon attended. The team displayed the 14-foot high, 29-foot long Claudia Chinook salmon replica, which promotes health watersheds, and distributed an activity sheet featuring a salmon license plate (attached).

#### Director's Community Visits

During the remainder of 2006, OWEB's Director will visit numerous communities around Oregon to touch base with key constituents, tour OWEB-funded projects, contact news media, and meet with watershed council staff and volunteers. The Director will invite Board members living in the vicinity of these visits to accompany him.

#### **Staff Contact**

For more information about OWEB outreach and communications activities, please contact Monte Turner, Oregon Plan Communications Coordinator, at [monte.turner@state.or.us](mailto:monte.turner@state.or.us) or 503-986-0195.