



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

775 Summer Street NE, Suite 360

Salem, OR 97301-1290

(503) 986-0178

FAX (503) 986-0199

www.oregon.gov/OWEB



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Ken Bierly, Deputy Director

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item L: Partnership Investments –Partnerships Status
January 21-22, 2009 OWEB Board Meeting**

I. Introduction

This report provides an update on the status of OWEB partnership investments.

II. Background

OWEB has invested in a number of partnership projects over the years. Each project area is progressing well given the strength of the partnerships and range of activities involved. One common link between these partnerships is that they do not go through OWEB's regular grant program process.

Because the partnership projects undergo different review processes, the Board last year formed the Partnership Investment Subcommittee to provide greater focus on these investment areas. The Subcommittee meets periodically to review the status of existing partnership projects and to review potential new ideas and proposals before they are introduced to the full board.

This report updates the Board on two specific partnership project areas— the Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative and Oregon 150 grants. The report also describes the discussions of the Partnership Investment Subcommittee relating to the overall program and the potential of additional partnership concepts.

Updates on several partnership projects are found in other reports for this meeting. The status of efforts related to the Oregon Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program is contained in see Agenda Item D8). A report on Special Investment Partnerships is located in Agenda Item I. A discussion of Oregon Plan Products is included in Agenda Item L-1.

III. Partnership Updates

A. Whole Watersheds Restoration Initiative

OWEB and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) started this partnership to encourage restoration in geographic priority areas using a step-wise strategic approach. The program was structured around anadromous fish restoration priorities at the basin scale. Within the priority basins, focus watersheds were chosen to develop a Watershed Action Plan from a watershed scale assessment. The program was intended to implement restoration actions

until all the actions identified in a Watershed Action Plan were completed. At that time a new focus watershed would be identified. The program was established to implement projects on both public and private lands in each focus watershed. The partnership has grown from a joint effort of OWEB and USFS by adding NOAA Fisheries as a significant funding partner and Ecotrust as program manager.

OWEB funds (\$545,000) have been fully allocated to projects selected in 2008. The partners solicited for 2009 projects in October of 2008 and had a review session in December of 2008. The 2009 projects will be awarded early in 2009. In staff conversations with the partners, a budget allocation will be requested for the 2009 – 2011 biennium from OWEB capital funds.

B. Oregon 150 Grants

In 2007, OWEB committed \$1 million to support the Oregon Sesquicentennial celebration by funding projects that benefit Oregon Symbol species (American beaver, Western Meadowlark, Oregon Swallowtail, and Chinook salmon). The program was a joint effort with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to help implement the Oregon Conservation Strategy. ODFW solicited for grant applications and ran a review process in spring of 2008. Five grants were awarded from this solicitation. In late summer of 2008, ODFW again solicited for grant applications. This solicitation resulted in the award of 11 grants. OWEB staff have written grant agreements for all but three of the awards. This partnership will end when the projects have been completed. Projects funded by the grants awarded in the spring are scheduled to be complete by February of 2009, while the projects funded with the recent awards have just been initiated. Staff are exploring media opportunities with ODFW.

IV. Partnership Investment Subcommittee Discussions

The Partnership Investment Subcommittee met on November 24, 2008 to discuss the status of existing partnerships and evaluate the significant level of interest in partnerships around the state. The Subcommittee discussed the progress of current partners, the interest in continuing the current partner relationships, and the effects of a curtailed budget for the coming biennium.

The Subcommittee advised caution about considering further partnership investments and recommended that staff focus on the effectiveness of the existing partnerships before moving forward with any significant expansion. The Subcommittee also discussed the need for the Board to consider the appropriate balance between the regular grant program and partnership efforts in developing a budget spending plan for next biennium.

OWEB staff have been approached by or have had discussions about as many as 13 additional partnership efforts. These range from biomass to carbon markets to geographic specific efforts. While there is a growing recognition of the value of focused efforts, it is important to wisely choose how to invest limited staff time. The Subcommittee did recognize that there were one or two possible additional partnerships that might be developed over the next biennium.

The ongoing efforts that will receive continued attention by staff are described below.

A. Upper Klamath Basin Keystone Initiative of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) recently approved funding to address the recovery of Lost River and shortnose suckers, and Klamath Rainbow Trout. The program is well structured, has clear goals and benchmarks, and active partners. The dedication of funding by NFWF and cooperative relations among the partners makes this an inviting partnership to consider. Staff will monitor this effort and work with the Partnership Subcommittee on the potential future role for OWEB.

B. Lower John Day Sustainable Communities Initiative

The county governments, watershed councils, and soil and water conservation districts in the Gilliam, Wheeler, and Sherman County area (Lower John Day Basin), along with the Wild Salmon Center and local landowners, have initiated a series of conversations about ways to achieve salmon recovery (Mid-Columbia Steelhead) and support economically viable local communities. The group has met twice and is working towards an integrated effort to identify community economic and social needs along with ecological needs for salmon recovery. This is a grassroots effort that is organizing in a critical part of the state. The effort needs to mature, but is a major opportunity to focus salmon recovery effort within a larger context. Staff will monitor this effort and work with the Partnership Subcommittee on future roles for OWEB.

V. Recommendations

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