

## March 16-17, 2010 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #C-9: Restoration Priorities

### Background

Goal 1, Strategy 1, Action 2 of the OWEB Strategic Plan directs staff to develop restoration priorities and integrate recovery plans and the Oregon Conservation Strategy. OWEB staff have met with the Oregon Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Environmental Quality to discuss aligning the priorities in the Conservation Strategy and OWEB restoration priorities. Staff have developed a work plan to create an effective cross walk between the recovery plans, the Conservation Strategy and the restoration priorities developed from watershed assessments. The work plan includes three activities: 1) compilation of the previously developed priorities in a common database; 2) developing priorities for freshwater and estuarine systems; and 3) assisting in the update of the Oregon Conservation Strategy to clearly connect OWEB restoration priorities and Conservation Strategy priorities. This report identifies the work involved in the first portion of the work plan.

### Compilation of Restoration Priorities

To date, OWEB has identified restoration priorities at the basin scale throughout most of the state. This effort started with a pilot project coordinated with watershed councils in the Willamette River subbasin. OWEB then annually funded work on restoration priorities in different regions of Oregon. The status of restoration priorities is summarized in Table 1, which is organized by the 15 reporting basins as used by OWEB.

**Table 1. Summary of basin priority projects organized by OWEB Reporting Basin, contract, and hydrologic area.**

#	OWEB Reporting Basins	Contract	No. of 5th Fields	4th Field
1	Deschutes	Columbia	64	
2	Hood	Columbia	15	
3	Grande Ronde	Columbia	24	
4	John Day	Columbia	44	
5	Klamath	South Oregon	36	
6	Lakes (Lake County)	South Oregon		4
6	Lakes (Harney County)	South Oregon		8
7	L. Columbia	Coho ESU Coast	3	
8	North Coast	Coho ESU Coast	60	
9	Malheur -Owyhee (Owyhee)	South Oregon		7
9	Malheur -Owyhee (Malheur)	Columbia	29	
10	Powder	Columbia	25	
11	Rogue	Rogue	8	
12	South Coast	South Coast	10	
13	Umatilla	Columbia	24	
14	Umpqua	Umpqua	19	
15	Willamette	Willamette	58	

The target geographic scale for the restoration priorities effort was fifth-field hydrologic unit codes (HUCs), however, not all project areas were amenable to this scale because information was not available at this level or watershed councils targeted finer scale information. The fifth-field HUC was the reporting unit for the Willamette and Columbia basin projects; and for the Klamath basin portion of the South Oregon project. The fourth-field HUC was used for the eastern basins of the South Oregon project – Lake, Harney and Owyhee watersheds – because of the lack of data in these areas. A finer scale (sixth-field, or seventh-field in the case of the MidCoast Council) was used in the Coho ESU Coast project at the request of the watershed councils participating in the assessment. The differences in reporting unit areas will need to be addressed as part of the effort going forward. Another consideration will be whether additional data gaps can be filled with more recent studies.

The restoration priorities development process evolved over time as OWEB worked with the individual characteristics of the basins and watershed councils. This resulted in a diversity of geographic reporting scales, limiting factors, reporting methods, and databases. Understanding these differences is necessary before compiling the priorities together into a single database. The dimensions of these different approaches are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2. The geographic scale and number of reporting units and limiting factors that were rated.**

Project	HUC Scale	Council/ Subbasin	Reporting Units - HUCS	Limiting Factor Categories	Limiting Factors
Willamette	Mix 4 & 5	26	58	5	47
Columbia	5	8	225	5	31
Coho ESU Coast	Mix 6 & 7	12	63	7	40
South Oregon - Klamath	5	1	37	4	14
South Oregon - Walla Walla	5	1	6	4	15
South Oregon - Owyhee, Harney, Lakes	4	3	19	6	na
Rogue	Mix 4 & 5	1	8	4	18
South Coast	Mix 4 & 5	1	10	3	11
Umpqua	5	1	19	4	10

The information for Willamette, Columbia, Coho ESU Coast, Klamath and Walla Walla projects are in electronic format, and are therefore accessible for placement into a common database. The information on the Rogue, South Coast and Umpqua will need to be reviewed and may need to be entered by hand into a database structure.

While much of the state has been covered, there are gaps in both geographic extent and information sources. For example, federal lands were not included in the Umpqua and Willamette basin projects, and there are some areas (e.g., Greater Oregon City Watershed Council) that were not covered in the original effort because there was no information where now there are watershed assessments. In addition, some relevant conservation planning documents, the Oregon Conservation Strategy and federal ESA Recovery Plans for salmon and steelhead, were not consistently integrated into the prioritization scheme.

To align the restoration priorities, the following assumptions are being considered by the staff:

**1. Geographic Scale**

The target geographic scale for reporting priorities is the fifth-field HUC (retaining fourth-field HUC scale where finer detail is not available). However, the database should retain the fine-scale information as reported by watershed councils. For example, for basins in the range of coho salmon the information was compiled at the sixth/seventh-field HUC scale.

**2. Data Gaps**

The data completed independently by watershed councils (Umpqua, Sandy, Rogue and South Coast basins) or where additional watershed studies have since been completed will need to be added and attributed to the database.

**3. Salmon and Steelhead Recovery Plans**

Include priorities identified in three ESA recovery plans: the Lower Columbia River, Upper Willamette, and Middle Columbia Basin. Also include information from the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

**4. Federal Lands**

In general, no additional effort is expected to address federal lands where they have not already been addressed.

**5. Use of the database**

OWEB wishes to have an information set that provides a consistent set of attributes for watersheds across the State. The information will be used to evaluate priorities within a basin to help evaluate grant requests from watershed councils. The database will be also be used to report restoration priorities to the OWEB Board at various geographic scales.

As decisions are made about this process, staff will update the Board.

**Staff Contact**

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Ken Bierly, at [ken.bierly@state.or.us](mailto:ken.bierly@state.or.us) or 503-986-0182.