



# Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

**Water Resources Department**

North Mall Office Building

725 Summer Street NE, Suite A

Salem, OR 97301-1266

503-986-0900

FAX 503-986-0904

**Oregon Water Resources Department  
Summary Presentation – Statewide Roundtables  
Fall 2008**

- **Background.** The Water Resources Department is the state agency responsible managing water supplies in the state (i.e., water rights and water allocation). The state is broken into five regions, with field offices located where we can help local communities with their water issues. There are 18 administrative basins in Oregon. We have been involved in the allocation and protection of water for a long time in Oregon. The Water Resources Department and its predecessors have been involved in Oregon's water issues since our "water code" was established in 1909. Next year will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oregon's water code.
- **What we do requires a lot of coordination with local government.** For instance, before we ever issue a water right, we coordinate with county planning departments to ensure the use is consistent with the county's land-use plans. In fact, the Department doesn't issue any water rights without sign-off from county planning departments.
- **We also consult on a regular basis with other state agencies.** Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife assist us with the review of water right permit applications. They let us know if we need to place conditions on new permits (requiring, for example, fish passage, fish screening or other protections). Sometimes, their input will lead us to deny or condition an application because of the environmental impacts it will have.
- **We have many opportunities for public input and public comment as well.** As part of our application processes, in our Commission meetings, and as part of our deliberations and other rule-makings, we provide significant opportunity for discussion with the public. We provide weekly announcements via e-mail, updating the public on the status of individual applications and decisions. You can get more information and sign up for these updates on our website: [www.wrd.state.or.us](http://www.wrd.state.or.us).
- **Once water rights are granted, the Department is responsible for protecting both instream and out-of-stream rights.**
  - The Department is responsible for more than 85,000 surface water, ground water, and reservoir rights statewide and about 230,000 domestic exempt wells.
  - Many of these rights are for instream purposes. The Department has converted more than 500 of the state's minimum perennial stream flows to instream water rights and has issued more than 900 state agency applied instream water rights.
  - Oregon leads the country in flow restoration as well, restoring about 900 cubic feet per second (cfs) of streamflow for fish and wildlife, recreation, and pollution abatement.

- With so many rights to manage, our Commission has been focusing during the last few years on how we can increase measurement. The Commission has set us on a strategic path for improving water use measurement of large diversions as well as diversions with significant resource impacts.
- **One of the most pressing issues we currently face across the state is a need for good data about the status of our ground water resources.** As previously mentioned, the work of our Department and that of county planners is closely linked. Information about ground water resources helps counties make land-use decisions and helps us understand whether any water is available for allocation. The majority of water applications coming into the Department are now ground water applications. (This is in large part because surface water is almost completely allocated, and unavailable for new users, especially during the summer).

Ground water application reviews are increasing in number and also in complexity, because of their interconnectedness with surface waters. We have quite a few applications waiting to be processed, and the Department's #1 budget request for next year is get more resources to support our ground water program.

- **Looking Ahead.** Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the Department's role and responsibilities protecting Oregon's water resources. The conversation and information you share as part of these roundtables will help inform the long-term planning work that our Water Resources Commission has begun, in coordination with the Environmental Quality Commission. Over the next several months and years you will be hearing more about long-term planning water resources planning efforts at both the state and the regional/basin level in Oregon. We encourage your continued participation and appreciate your willingness to partner with us.

Contact:  
Brenda Bateman  
Senior Policy Coordinator  
Oregon Water Resources Department  
725 Summer St. NE, Suite A  
Salem, OR 97301-1271  
Brenda.O.Bateman@ wrd.state.or.us  
503-986-0879