



# Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board



## Strategic Plan



October 2024

**Mission:** To help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies.

## Our Mission

**To help protect and restore healthy watersheds and natural habitats that support thriving communities and strong economies.**

OWEB achieves this mission primarily by serving as a responsive, science-based, and collaborative funder of locally-led land and water acquisition and restoration efforts. This plan outlines specific actions that OWEB will take to pursue our mission through this role.

Everyone in the world lives in a watershed. Urban, rural, desert, rainforest – every part of the landscape is in a watershed and every part is critical to watershed health.

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board cares about and invests in the long-term health of Oregon’s watersheds, both the land and the water that flows through it. OWEB will seek out and develop leaders reflecting the diversity of Oregon to engage in the rewarding work of watershed restoration.

### Healthy watersheds...

- Reshape landscapes and keep the environment clean.
- Support Oregon’s economy and communities.
- Sustain diverse habitats and industries.
- Provide clean water for drinking and recreation.
- Provide enough food, water, and shelter for the people, plants, fish and wildlife that inhabit them.
- Are supported by people who reflect the diversity of their communities.

***When the watershed is vibrant and healthy, we are too.***



## PROLOGUE: Introduction to our Strategic Plan

Building on the strategic plan of 2018, the staff and board of OWEB engaged in a 9-month effort to refresh the strategic plan for the next five years.

OWEB engaged the planning process in **three phases**.

### Phase 1 – Get Clear

To provide clarity and orientation for planning, we engaged people both internal and external to our agency to provide valuable perspectives to inform the strategic plan, including the following:

- **Community and Partner Interviews.** The staff of OWEB reached out and convened 29 in-depth interviews with critical partners and community members. (A summary of themes is included in Appendix B.)
- **Community and Partner Survey.** A survey was administered to partners of OWEB, including a set of questions seeking perspectives of partners to inform the planning process.
- **Board Interviews.** Each board member was interviewed individually by the planning consultant, and a summary was provided to the OWEB leadership and staff to inform work on the strategic plan. (A summary of themes is included in Appendix D.)
- **Staff Focus Groups.** The staff of OWEB gathered in focus groups to analyze the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats to OWEB (SWOT analysis, Appendix A) as well as the political, environmental, social, technological, and legal issues affecting OWEB (PESTLE analysis, Appendix C).

These perspectives inform the development of priorities and strategies for the strategic plan.

### Phase 2 – Get Focused

A staff committee shaped the first draft of strategic priorities, identifying the shifts of emphasis from the most recent strategic plan and identifying the key elements for each priority. This draft of priorities was then reviewed and edited by the OWEB Executive Team and reviewed by the board during an in-person board retreat. This phase included:

- **Strategy Committee.** The strategy committee shaped the initial articulation of priorities for the strategic direction of OWEB for the next five years.
- **Executive Team.** The executive team reviewed and revised the priorities.
- **Board Review.** The board discussed the priorities and shaped them further to provide high-level guidance for OWEB going forward.

### Phase 3 – Get Moving

With priorities identified and articulated, all OWEB staff convened in small groups to identify high-potential strategies for each of the priorities. These strategies were reviewed and vetted by the Strategy Committee, narrowing the options to a set of core strategies for each of the priorities. Once the primary strategies were selected, a team of staff members were organized to build out the tactics and develop a prospectus for each of the strategies.

- **Staff Teams.** Teams of staff organized around each Priority and generated specific strategies, core activities and outcomes.
- **Strategy Committee.** The strategy committee reviewed, focused, and revised the strategies.

- **Executive Team.** The executive team reviewed, edited, and made decisions about the focus, scale, and scope of the strategies.
- **Board Review.** OWEB board members were interviewed individually at the beginning of the process, and the board reviewed and revised draft priorities, strategies, and tactics at the October 2023, January 2024, and April 2024 board meetings.

The plan that follows represents the salient ideas of strategy for OWEB. **Part 1: Identity** affirms the identity of OWEB. **Part 2: Priorities** articulates the high-level priorities that define the direction of OWEB’s strategy. And **Part 3: Action** describes the strategies we will engage to meet the opportunities of our priorities.



## PART 1 IDENTITY: Who we are



Our strategic plan is grounded in our identity. These are the values, beliefs, and mandates that guide us.

### OUR ETHIC

In all things, we will...

#### Be bold

**We will:**

- Pursue the greatest potential, not the easiest path.
- Listen to and explore new ideas.
- Focus on opportunities and strive to overcome barriers.
- Think in new ways and try new and innovative strategies.
- Be believable in all we say and do

#### Be open and transparent

**We are committed to active, 2-way communication to:**

- Develop and maintain strong partnerships.
- Ensure decisions are transparently made and clearly articulated.

#### Be forward thinking

**We will consider future Oregonians in all we do.**

Informed by Oregon’s legacy of watershed restoration, we will work with partners to develop a vision for sustainable watersheds in the future.

#### Be curious

**We will:**

- Encourage staff and partners to ask questions.
- Be responsive and flexible, adapting to opportunities and challenges.
- Listen, learn, and think about watershed health and cooperative conservation in new ways.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

The following ideas provide the rationale for our grantmaking work.

### **Healthy watersheds sustain healthy communities.**

Oregon's watersheds are intertwined with its people and communities. The land is a part of our culture, our food and water, our work and our recreation. A community's economic and social health comes from the health of the lands that surround them and the ability to draw enjoyment from clean water, open spaces, and natural habitats.

### **Every Oregonian plays a role in the health of our watersheds.**

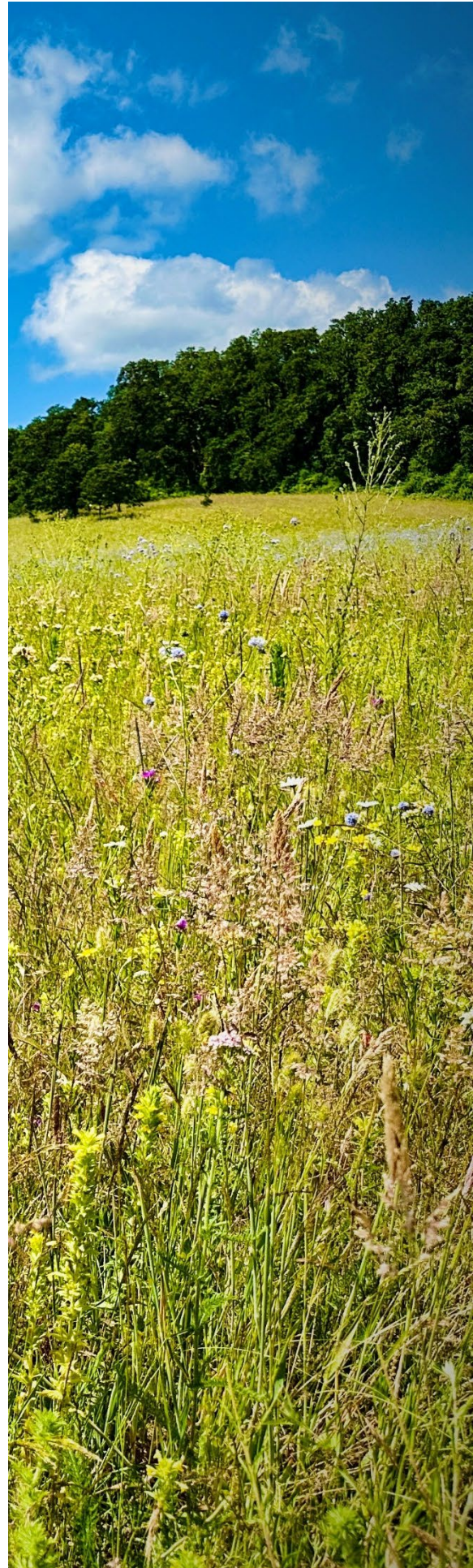
We are committed to being profoundly inclusive. Every person – whether urban or rural, rich or poor; regardless of age, ethnicity, education, beliefs, or politics – has something valuable to contribute to a healthy watershed. People who connect with their watershed care for their watershed.

### **It takes broad partnership to support resilient watersheds.**

No individual landowner or community needs to grapple with watershed challenges alone. Cooperative conservation is built from broad, diverse partnerships that collaborate to develop and implement enduring watershed solutions. It is the "Oregon way" to invest in restoring and sustaining healthy, resilient watersheds.

### **Improving our watersheds requires taking the long view.**

Healthy watersheds require the stewardship of generations. We and our partners must address challenges resulting from generations of impacts. Our work requires patience, persistence, discipline, and a vision for the future.





## THE IMPACT WE INTEND

We design our actions to achieve results in areas of impact. Our grantmaking work is in service to...

### Healthy, resilient watersheds

A healthy, resilient watershed provides clean water and a vibrant place to live for people, fish and wildlife, now and in the future. OWEB’s investments will result in measurable improvements that lead to healthier streams and upland habitats that are resilient to long-term impacts of climate change and population dynamics.

### Broad care and stewardship of watersheds by Oregonians

OWEB and partners will engage Oregonians according to their unique connection with the land – whether cultural, spiritual, economic or recreational – to increase their understanding of the impact of their everyday actions on the health of their watersheds.

### Adaptive capacity of communities to support their watersheds

Engaged, diverse community members can address new challenges and design new approaches to improve their watershed. When landowners, land managers, and local citizens are actively involved in shared learning and leadership within local organizations, the capacity of communities to improve the health of their watersheds is expanded.

### Strengthened economies emerging from healthy watersheds

The impact of a healthy watershed extends to all segments of Oregon’s economy. Oregon’s natural resource industries – agriculture, forestry, fishing, and recreation – depend on healthy watersheds. The work of restoring natural areas creates local jobs. When communities understand the link between healthy watersheds and a strong economy, they are more likely to invest in improving both.

### Strong and diverse partnerships that promote and sustain healthy watersheds

Strong and diverse partnerships provide the opportunity for cross-pollination of ideas, cross-boundary work, adaptive learning, and heightened fidelity to science. OWEB is uniquely positioned to support diverse partnerships at all levels.

## THE APPROACH WE TAKE

Our grantmaking work is characterized by...

### Involving people and communities broadly and in partnership

- Involving community members with diverse interests at all levels
- Collaborating and communicating to promote community ownership of watershed health
- Building and mobilizing partnerships

### Using best available science supported by local knowledge

- Identifying the root cause
- Basing approaches on the best available science
- Incorporating local knowledge, experience, and culture
- Catalyzing local energy and investment

### Investing with long-term outcomes for climate resilience

- Taking the long view on projects and interventions
- Maintaining progress into the future

### Demonstrating impact through meaningful monitoring & evaluation

- Measuring and communicating watershed change and community impact
- Increasing appropriate accountability
- Changing course when something isn't working

### Reaching and involving underrepresented populations

- Including voices and perspectives that are not typically at the table
- Ensuring information is accessible to diverse audiences





## PART 2 PRIORITIES: Where we are going

The following priorities articulate the directions we are growing over the next five years:



### Priority 1: Through our grantmaking, build awareness of the relationship between people and watershed protection and restoration

OWEB serves as an information source and catalyst for partners as they carry messages to their communities about the importance of watersheds to the health and vitality of all Oregonians. This will include the development of storytelling and community engagement with dual goals. First, to help Oregonians take an active role in the health of their watershed and second, to increase awareness of the role watersheds play in improving the well-being of the people who reside in them. This will result in a growing care and stewardship of local watersheds and a deeper commitment to watershed work throughout the state. **This priority includes efforts to:**

- Tell the watershed protection and restoration story clearly and compellingly
- Elevate the success of watershed restoration and the benefits to the people of Oregon
- Increase awareness for the long-term horizon of watershed outcomes
- Emphasize our commitment to partners in watershed work



### Priority 2: Leverage our position as an anchor funder to engage the diversity of Oregonians in watershed enhancement work

OWEB's board and staff will engage with partners and grantees to develop models and approaches that actively involve all Oregonians in improving the health of our watersheds. In its own practice, OWEB will seek out and develop leaders that reflect the diversity of Oregon to engage them in the rewarding work of improving the health of their watersheds. OWEB will adopt practices that support diversity in our own work and encourage equity in our grantmaking through training, peer-to-peer learning, and other awareness-increasing approaches. This will shape the culture of the watershed work over time, developing a watershed protection and restoration system that is diverse and inclusive. **This priority includes efforts to:**

- Pursue diverse representation in watershed work through engagement grant offerings
- Thoughtfully pursue board and staff diversity
- Increase engagement with non-traditional partners on working lands and in urban and rural communities
- Engage communities disproportionately impacted by climate change



### Priority 3: Use our funding to strengthen and leverage capacity of people and organizations to achieve healthy watersheds

Diverse organizations and agencies provide capacity in many forms. OWEB will work with partners of all sizes and at all organizational levels to design resources and deploy tools to enhance the capacity of communities and strategic partnerships to participate in cooperative conservation. Partnerships will have the support they need to develop and implement strategic, science-based approaches to improve watershed health. OWEB will support watershed organizations and associated watershed work at all levels in pursuit of a statewide watershed protection and restoration network that is resilient and sustainable, and capable of achieving ecological outcomes. OWEB will be a statewide champion for partnerships in watershed health, supporting the environment that allows strong and effective partnerships of all sizes and at all levels to grow and flourish. Partnerships that engage a broad range of partners are more inclusive, equitable, effective, consistent, reliable, purposeful, and innovative. This inclusion will amplify the impact of watershed work and develop resilience and capacity in the organizations seeking to improve and sustain healthy watersheds. **This priority includes efforts to:**

- Elevate expectations for the quality of watershed work in communities
- Provide training and technical support to increase internal capacity of organizations
- Incentivize and increase strategic partnerships among people, organizations, and agencies
- Contribute to a stable funding portfolio for sustained watershed work



## Priority 4: Advance learning about watershed protection and restoration effectiveness through coordinated monitoring

OWEB will develop greater capacity throughout the system of watershed partners to monitor progress, learn from projects, track effectiveness, gather data, respond to data, and advance the cause of healthy, resilient watersheds through monitoring and evaluation. OWEB will work with partners to ensure frameworks to receive and share information exist. These frameworks will use the best scientific thinking and different ways of knowing including indigenous and community knowledge within and outside the restoration community. OWEB and partners will develop monitoring "networks" to which organizations in all parts of the state can contribute. **This priority includes efforts to:**

- Facilitate the use and development of science-based planning tools, indigenous knowledge, and different ways of knowing.
- Facilitate the exchange of information and insight from monitoring while being respectful of tribal sovereignty and self-governance.
- Promote tools and best practices to connect all forms of ecological knowledge to the practitioners.
- Monitor the effectiveness of actions in pursuit of climate objectives.
- Invest in long-term monitoring efforts.



## Priority 5: Increase investment connecting urban and working lands to watershed health

Oregon's natural resource industries - agriculture, forestry, fishing, recreation – are dependent on healthy watersheds for their sustainability, including on private lands. OWEB will develop strategies to help local partners engage broader participation among those who own and manage working lands. This includes working broadly with partners who own or manage working lands and conservation communities to develop intentional approaches that fully embrace the value of well-managed working lands, where appropriate, to habitat, water quality, and local economies. OWEB will also develop strategies to enhance watersheds within urban lands to strengthen climate resilience and benefit urban communities most vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

*NOTE: "Working land" means land that is actively used by an agricultural or forest land owner or operator for an agricultural or forestland operation that includes, but need not be limited to, active engagement in farming, ranching or timber management. This priority includes efforts to:*

- Improve the engagement of working lands in coordinated watershed strategy.
- Increase adoption of best practices among landowners.
- Communicate the economic benefits of healthy watersheds for working lands.



## Priority 6: Take bold and innovative action toward funding projects that advance climate resilience

OWEB will catalyze, support, and encourage the design and implementation of watershed health innovations by grant applicants. These innovations can reach beyond project implementation to touch all areas of OWEB's granting that support healthy watersheds – from capacity and partnership development to technical assistance, implementation, and monitoring. OWEB will continually weigh the agency's investment risk to encourage design and experimentation in watershed work while ensuring the public benefits from our investments.

**This priority includes efforts to:**

- Pursue and support experimental programs.
- Make room to try new techniques in restoration.
- Design action to respond and mitigate the effects of climate change on watershed health.
- Identify and develop new and innovative ways of pursuing watershed health and communicating climate benefits.
- Reduce barriers in grantmaking.

**PART 3 ACTION: What we will do**



**Priority 1:** Through our grantmaking, build awareness of the relationship between the people of Oregon and watershed protection and restoration

**Strategy 1.1 Elevate the story of how protection and restoration promotes healthy watersheds**

Restoration is crucial to the enhancement of watershed health. While OWEB programs provide pathways for critical restoration to occur on the landscape, there is not always effective communication about the importance and outcomes these restoration acts have on the watershed. This strategy focuses on outreach and communication to build understanding about restoration work among communities and decision makers, the stories of those engaging in this work, and how restoration maintains healthy and resilient watersheds. We will build on existing programs and processes to gather information that can be used to effectively tell restoration stories and share the importance of the work happening throughout Oregon.

**PRIMARY OBJECTIVE**

Release a watershed restoration story or similar success story to traditional and non-traditional multiple audiences through at least 3 modes of communication every year.

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Communicate updates and information regularly about OWEB programs with key partners (restoration practitioners, conservation community, ag community, forestry community) and grantees. *Quarterly*
- Meet with at least 5 legislators (and legislative staff) per annual regular legislative session to provide “OWEB 101’s” and updates about agency work. *Annually*
- Continue targeted grant offering “Telling the Restoration Story.” *Ongoing*
- Update communications (website, social media, county fact sheets, etc.) with recent restoration stories. *Quarterly*
- Involve media in restoration engagement (tour, stories, board, etc.). *Annually*

**KEY OUTCOMES**

- Policymakers and decision-makers are aware and informed of OWEB programs and services
- Potential partners learn about watershed restoration and grant offerings
- General public have greater awareness and understanding of watershed restoration

## Strategy 1.2 Connect people around watershed work

OWEB is regarded as an effective facilitator that provides connections and resources to restoration partners around specific natural resource topics. To leverage this strength, this strategy focuses on continuing to connect partners and sharing important messaging and priorities with them. We will engage with partners in a variety of ways, so that information can be shared and restoration successes can be celebrated.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Offer at least 6 opportunities annually for OWEB to facilitate active connections with partners and between partners.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Continue using grantee email list and Gov Delivery to send announcements and share information.
- Increase opportunities at Board meetings for local Grantees/partners to tell their stories.
- Offer more opportunities in each region for informal meetings and gatherings with Grantees/customers (unrelated to grant review) to answer questions, listen to customers, and provide local OWEB updates.
- Set up a pilot mentoring program among FIP Grantees.
- Deliver watershed training videos, or other media formats, with people from different areas discussing different approaches to restoration.
- Develop and enhance online tool for customers to mine lessons learned from reporting.
- Provide a virtual office hour on regular intervals.

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Partners throughout Oregon have better engagement with OWEB.
- Partners have greater understanding, awareness, and learning from OWEB.



## Strategy 1.3 Increase use of OWEB’s Engagement grant offering to support grantees doing community engagement

Community support and participation in watershed restoration work is highly dependent on effective community engagement. Without the ability to connect with communities, the restoration work often lacks the support and understanding necessary to be successful. This strategy will focus on continuing the development of the Engagement grant offering to increase community participation efforts in restoration work. We will focus on expanding the support, trainings, and resources available to partners and support the capacity of watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts to share their watershed enhancement success stories. It is imperative to include diverse partners and communities through engagement grantmaking.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Provide at least 1 opportunity annually for applicants to learn about Engagement grants and projects/tactics.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Collaborate with OWRD and other agencies to finalize and share the 10 voluntary best practices with OWEB partners for community engagement around water projects. *3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2024*
- Offer a webinar with panel of Grantees that have completed successful Engagement grant projects reaching underserved communities AND how it led to restoration or acquisition. *Annually*
- Invite Grantees to present successful engagement projects at the Board meetings to demonstrate how engaging diverse communities in Oregon. *Annually*
- Work with CONNECT to offer training to build engagement skills, including skills to engage underserved communities, among Grantees. *One in each of next 2-4 years*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- OWEB partners improve the quality of their engagement practices.
- Partners increase the scope and scale of their engagement activities, including engagement with underserved communities.





**Priority 2: Leverage our position as an anchor funder to engage the diversity of Oregonians in watershed enhancement**

**Strategy 2.1 Enhance OWEB presence throughout Oregon**

OWEB partners appreciate being connected with the agency in-person. Under this strategy, OWEB staff and board members will prioritize outreach to grantees, prospective applicants, and community partners. We will continue to travel around the state for Board meetings and field visits and make space for face-to-face interactions. OWEB staff will increase the agency's presence at conferences and similar events that attract local watershed practitioners and diverse audiences and prioritize spending time with partners locally.

**PRIMARY OBJECTIVES**

1. Provide at least four opportunities per year for community engagement with OWEB Board and staff.
2. Increase OWEB presence at conferences not previously attended by OWEB staff/board in each fiscal year 2025-30.
3. Ensure all staff participate in some way in at least one sector event or conference every year.

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Continue meeting with at least 3 new non-traditional partners per quarter as well as several groups of existing partners. *Ongoing*
- OWEB’s Director and Deputy Director visit each of OWEB’s six regions at least once per year and meet with local partners. *Ongoing*
- Develop and implement a communications plan to announce public board member vacancies when they come open. *Ongoing*
- Host a lunch and learn with OWEB staff and landowner/s about their experience with a project. *Annually*
- Seek out non-traditional events where OWEB can intentionally engage with more diverse groups of natural resource professionals and organizations. *Ongoing*

**KEY OUTCOMES**

- Broad awareness across the state and across diverse communities regarding opportunities to serve on the OWEB board.
- New, diverse partners, have relationships with OWEB Board and staff and are engaged in grantmaking and operations.

## Strategy 2.2 Increase diversity and inclusion through improving access to our programs

Our grantmaking needs to reflect the diversity of Oregonians. We will continue to assess who is engaging in our grantmaking and foster connections to expand partnerships and the grantee pool. We will assess our eligibility and evaluation criteria to increase inclusion and make the grant application process more accessible and reduce barriers to entry. We will engage people with local expertise and partners to collaboratively assess whether existing evaluation criteria preclude projects on working lands<sup>1</sup> and urban areas that restore and enhance watersheds. We will continue to provide applicants with individual training, respond to requests for examples of successfully funded projects, and connect new applicants with current grantees. We will expand outreach on grant programs and provide simple, clear language for public consumption. We will continue to identify areas where application or grant requirements can be simplified and streamlined while maintaining OWEB’s reputation as an accountable grantor of public funds.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

1. Engage organizations that have not traditionally been involved in watershed restoration work by attending # of non-traditional partner events in the next two years.
2. Evaluate eligibility and evaluation criteria every 5 years to increase inclusion and make the grant application process more accessible and streamlined.

### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Identify and implement strategies to gather information on the organizations that apply for our grant programs and the communities they serve. *Identify strategies: 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2025 – 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2026; Begin implementation: 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 2027*
- Evaluate how OWEB’s information assets (OGMS, OWRI datasets; training resources on website) are made available to external customers and align with data equity principles emerging from DAS/EIS. *Start 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2025*
- Promote the work of our partners through social media and through OWEB’s partnership with Oregon Lottery, highlighting at least one new organization per quarter. *Ongoing*
- Identify data needs about OWEB's investments in working and urban lands and use existing data systems to generate baseline data for these parameters. *By 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2026*
- Evaluate opportunities (through rules or policies) to offer tribal specific grant offerings and grant offerings for underserved communities. *By 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2024*
- As directed by HB 3409, direct Natural and Working Lands funds to eligible projects via open solicitation and OAHP grants. *By 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2024*
- When we evaluate grant program rules, ensure we are evaluating rules to consider opportunities and barriers for engagement with tribes and underrepresented communities. *Ongoing*

### KEY OUTCOMES

- Increased engagement with a broader diversity of Oregonians in OWEB grant programs.
- Improved outreach to communities through increased data on who is applying and receiving OWEB grants as well as where those projects occur (i.e., working/urban lands).



<sup>1</sup> \*See definition in Part 2, Priority 5.

## Strategy 2.3 Engage organizations, entities, and communities that have not traditionally been involved in watershed restoration work

We will grow capacity for delivering strategic restoration programs at the local level by investing in engagement and technical assistance grants to broaden the array of entities engaged in eligible restoration or acquisition projects. We will develop our ability to engage BIPOC and other underrepresented communities<sup>2</sup> We will continue learning about barriers to engagement in watershed enhancement and explore ways to connect around shared restoration values with organizations that we have historically not engaged with.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Explore barriers annually to new organizations applying for grants and work to remove barriers through reviewing administrative rules as time allows, continuing the process to improve our grant application.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Build on the new relationships developed under Strategy 2.1 to explore how OWEB’s mission and grant offerings might align with their work. *Ongoing*
- Review and streamline application for accessibility. *As necessary*
- Develop program materials in other languages to increase information delivery to non-traditional partners and underserved communities. *Ongoing*
- Recruit TRT members from non-traditional partners who have not previously been on OWEB TRTs. *Ongoing*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Relationship development, trust and possibly OWEB project implementation on non-traditional partner land.
- Improved representation of grantees to reflect the diversity of Oregonians.
- TRTs that reflect the diversity of Oregonians.

<sup>2</sup> Defined as “Environmental Justice Communities” in Section 10 of HB 2077, 2022 Legislative Session





**Priority 3:** Use our funding to strengthen and leverage people and organizational capacity to achieve healthy watersheds

**Strategy 3.1** Support diverse funding opportunities to sustain the capacity of partners

Working to improve the health of Oregon’s watersheds is most effective when the ability to undertake that work is recognized and empowered at the local level. Finding funding for the human side of a restoration program is difficult outside of the traditional project-by-project approach grantors typically use. Successful restoration requires a concerted effort with stable long-term funding necessary to form relationships with landowners, and to design, implement, and monitor projects. Without stable funding, long-term planning cannot effectively occur; however local organizations need more funding and resources than OWEB alone can provide. Under this strategy, we will continue to support costs of watershed councils and soil and water conservation districts and work with other funders and partners to explore additional funding that supports local infrastructure for project planning and implementation.

**PRIMARY OBJECTIVE**

Using the Capacity Matters report, work with OWEB and ODA staff and OSU Extension to develop 3-5 resources for councils, districts and funders highlighting the significance of longer-term grants to work toward landscape-scale restoration and conservation.

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- OWEB staff continue to participate in external, state/region/nation-wide networks to describe our capacity funding opportunities and their critical role in on-the-ground restoration. *2027*
- Review Capacity Matters report to identify key points to share with other funders and grantees. *2025-2030*
- Share information internally between project managers/staff to discuss strategies to support grantee capacity. *Ongoing*

**KEY OUTCOMES**

- A diversity of funding opportunities exists to support local capacity.
- OWEB staff better able to support local partners in their restoration efforts.

## Strategy 3.2 Expand training for partners

Science and technology, as well as our understanding of indigenous knowledge and different ways of knowing, are always evolving. Restoration practitioners and other human resources are necessary to deliver comprehensive programs. Under this strategy, grant programs will provide opportunities for relevant training, including non-traditional training opportunities tailored to local contexts and opportunities to increase collaboration, cooperation, and reciprocity through the learning experience.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

By 2030, grantee organizations will have improved capacity to implement watershed enhancement programs as a result of focused training and funding programs.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Continue efforts to support grantees through regular training opportunities, e.g., FIP Gathering, fiscal training, Grant applications, etc. *Ongoing*
- Gather information on grantee training needs that could be met by OWEB or other training resources. *Ongoing*
- Work with the Conservation Partnership to ensure that trainings delivered match grantee needs around capacity, including capacity to build community support for watershed restoration and protection. *2025*
- Collaborate with the Oregon Conservation Partnership to enhance training opportunities for local councils, districts, and land trusts through the statewide partnership support grant. *2024*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Grantees have greater access to critical training in board development, grant writing, fiscal grant management, restoration practices, etc.
- Grantees are more successful in securing funding, managing grants, and implementing on-the-ground restoration projects.





## Priority 4: Advance learning about watershed restoration effectiveness through coordinated monitoring

### Strategy 4.1 Facilitate learning through monitoring

We will continue to invest to increase shared knowledge and learning and promote a greater awareness of effective practices. This will include investing in specific funding opportunities for monitoring and incorporate effectiveness monitoring throughout the agency’s various grant offerings to support shared learning and adaptive management. This will include convening and coordinating with experts, translating data, and identifying gaps in monitoring. Many monitoring projects funded by OWEB contribute to established long-term datasets, filling an important role within the state of Oregon. In addition to providing funding opportunities, there is a need to promote existing guidance and ‘best practices’ to practitioners and partners. This strategy recognizes an emerging need to monitor the effectiveness of restoration in pursuit of climate objectives, to promote the results of this learning, foster a unified vision for healthy watersheds, and to incorporate learnings about landscape-scale effectiveness into project-level evaluation criteria.

#### PRIMARY OBJECTIVES

1. Support monitoring and evaluation efforts that support each of OWEB’s watershed restoration grant programs through allocations in the biennial spending plan.
2. Support and expand ongoing efforts to quantify benefits from watershed restoration in the face of a changing climate.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Continue to engage with subject matter experts through inter-agency teams working to quantify outcomes from restoration investments. *Ongoing*
- Continue to support the SIA grant initiative with a Monitoring and Assessment Group that provides feedback, guidance and ‘best practices’ on monitoring outcomes from investments in ag water quality. *Ongoing*
- Create and promote opportunities to convene monitoring grantees to share, discuss, learn about common monitoring successes and challenges. *Ongoing*
- Provide updates on monitoring learning and accomplishments to OWEB Grants committee and OWEB Board. Connect updates to the relevant items in the OWEB spending plan to ensure continued support for monitoring. *Biennially*
- Continue to coordinate the MF John Day River Intensively Monitored Watershed and disseminate findings from 15 Year Summary Report to a variety of audiences. *2024-2025*
- Work with grantees to summarize findings from stage zero restoration effectiveness monitoring. *2024-2026*
- Continue to summarize and evaluate findings from climate responses provided through OWEB Monitoring Grants; provide information to support watershed monitoring within the context of a changing climate. *Ongoing through 2026*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Increased restoration efficiencies across the state enterprise.
- OWEB and SIA partners are informed by data on the efficacy of conservation actions.
- OWEB and partners are learning and adapting from a common system of data collection and management.
- OWEB Board makes decisions informed by monitoring investments.
- Partners incorporate learnings from the MF John Day River Intensively Monitored Watershed and other projects across the state.
- Greater awareness and use of products by partners.

### Strategy 4.2 Learn, share, and support efforts to integrate Indigenous knowledge

Indigenous knowledge and different ways of understanding Oregon’s watersheds are emerging and are not yet fully incorporated into watershed restoration effectiveness monitoring. This strategy will find ways to ethically and effectively partner with Indigenous Peoples. The results will help create a shared future of healthy lands, waters and communities.

#### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

By the conclusion of the 2025-2027 biennium (June 30, 2027) develop tools/guidance to guide OWEB and OWEB’s grantees on how to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into effectiveness monitoring.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Interview each federally recognized tribe in Oregon and the Nez Perce Tribe regarding opportunities to incorporate indigenous knowledge that they are comfortable sharing into watershed restoration effectiveness monitoring. *2024-2025*
- Share lessons learned through board-represented agencies and other practitioners. *2024-2026*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Greater support for and application of indigenous knowledge in restoration grantmaking and leadership.
- The watershed restoration sector has greater understanding and application of indigenous knowledge.

### Strategy 4.3 Communicate data-driven outcomes to guide restoration investments

In addition to tracking progress and generating data, it is important to provide the information in a meaningful way so that it can reach interested parties and inform future projects. Publicity often centers on the “success story,” but practitioners and interested parties also want to know what \*hasn’t\* worked well, and what lessons have been learned by those who have lived on, worked, and intimately understood the land. This strategy will build action-oriented approaches to sharing restoration outcomes and find ways to create space for relevant adaptive management.

#### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Develop online publicly accessible visual tools to make OWEB data (metrics, funding) more available to a broader audience by the first quarter of 2026.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Develop additional dashboards (OWRI, OITT) to make the biennial report and FIP progress tracking more visually accessible. *End of 2025*
- Continue to collect, process, and synthesize OWRI data to track progress, support effectiveness monitoring, and inform planning of future projects by having a baseline of completed restoration activities/locations accessible through the Oregon Explorer website. *Annually*
- Communicate best practices and lessons learned from grantees using OWEB’s online resources. *2025-2027 biennium*
- Continue to recruit grantees to “Tell the Restoration Story.” *2024-2026*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Relevant data are publicly available to increase efficiency and learning
- More efficient, coordinated efforts for agencies and partners
- Partners improve their strategies and practices from understanding lessons learned
- Partners provided outcomes from TRS.



## Priority 5: Increase investment connecting urban and working lands to watershed health

### Strategy 5.1 Promote value of multi-benefit watershed projects

Most OWEB-funded restoration projects happen on working farms or forests. Restoring habitat alters the way land is used for production while also sometimes providing benefits to landowners, operators, and lessees through improved operational efficiencies. Watershed restoration often has dual benefits of positively affecting the health of whole ecosystems and improving community economic factors. Under this strategy, we will showcase working lands in watershed restoration success stories, clearly demonstrate that restoration and production co-exist, and promote success stories where producers speak to the value of restoration.

#### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

By 2028, articulate the multiple benefits provided by restoration projects on working land and in urban areas.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Identify possible candidates for Telling the Restoration Story grants on urban and working lands. *2024*
- Determine whether there is a funding gap for urban projects. If so, develop a decision-making rubric around urban projects. *2025*
- Identify similarities and differences between urban projects and other projects to see whether changes to review lenses need to be made. *2025*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- General public has a greater understanding of the value and benefits of conservation and restoration on urban and working lands.
- More resources are provided for urban grants.
- More resources are provided through OAHF grant apps.

### Strategy 5.2 Increase investment connecting of urban and working lands to watershed health

To further our reach, we will continue building relationships with people and groups that work with operators of working lands, strengthening our connection. This strategy includes work to connect to working lands groups with which OWEB has not worked extensively in the past. We will build on and promote grass-roots connections among existing partners. Seeking local expert knowledge about the nexus of restoration and working lands is critical.

#### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

By 2030, establish a network of urban and working lands practitioners that incentivizes new participants in restoration.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Foster dialog and collaboration with working land operators through long range conservation management planning and implementation. *By 2025*
- Address gaps through NWL funding. *By 2027*
- Increase landowner engagement with the OWEB Board. *Ongoing*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Those who live on and work with the land are more meaningfully engaged in restoration work.
- Those who live on and work with the land are more invested in strategic conservation.
- Partners increase their capacity to support conservation on working lands.

## Strategy 5.3 Support and fund grantees building or expanding partnerships with urban constituencies

Although sometimes overlooked, urban areas are critical resources in the watershed landscape both in terms of human relationships and potential effects on wildlife habitat and water quality. Urban areas can both provide important natural resource values and expand the constituency that supports continued funding for watershed restoration. This strategy will support and expand partnerships our grantees have with private entities and local governments to develop opportunities for watershed restoration and address environmental justice concerns.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Expand use of existing grant offerings to support urban partnerships capable of implementing restoration projects by 2029.

#### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Encourage use of partnership technical assistance grants by partnerships that have a specific focus on engaging groups within urban boundaries to further promote urban watershed conservation. *By July 2024*
- Incorporate input from NWL outreach to EJ communities into OAHP programs for conservation management plans and TA projects. *By November 2024*

#### KEY OUTCOMES

- Increased partnership with urban community groups.
- Greater funding for urban community groups to engage in watershed conservation.
- Increased learning and visibility of urban watershed restoration work.



**Priority 6: Take bold and innovative action toward funding projects that advance climate resilience**

**Strategy 6.1 Increase support for bold and innovative grant making in service to watershed restoration and protection**

Restoration is an evolving practice, with on-the-ground activities changing as we test and learn. As an example, Stage 0 restoration, a technique now gaining in popularity, would likely have been discarded as an option 30 years ago. This strategy is aimed at increasing our tolerance and support for projects and ideas that promote bold and innovative action that will be important in the face of a changing climate, understanding that there will be risks and failures, but also unexpected successes and benefits. We will showcase examples of bold and innovative approaches, sharing lessons learned and failures, to encourage exploration and experimentation by grantees and promote increased risk tolerance of technical review team members and OWEB staff and board. We will also look for opportunities to bring in practitioners testing out cutting-edge approaches to stimulate new ideas and thinking among staff and partners. As part of this strategy, we will encourage innovation and the implementation of new practices for climate resilience and carbon sequestration.

**PRIMARY OBJECTIVE**

Over the next 3-5 years, increase support for innovative project implementation that promotes climate resilience and is implemented (or accepted) by OWEB staff, review teams, and grantees.

**CORE ACTIVITIES**

- Train, facilitate, and encourage review teams, OWEB staff, and grantees to be more tolerant of risk and bold and innovative actions. *Ongoing*
- Assess and refine the lenses applied during application reviews to accommodate bold and innovative actions. *By 2025*
- Showcase examples of both success and failure of bold and innovative actions to OWEB staff, grantees, and review teams. *Ongoing*
- Partner with implementers and experts to share information about opportunities for learning about and expanding exploration and use of streamflow restoration via a session at CONNECT. *Ongoing*

**KEY OUTCOMES**

- RRTs, staff, and grantees are trained.
- Application evaluation considerations reviewed and revised as needed.
- Increase in learning through documentation and debriefing of successes and failures from projects.
- Improvements in strategies, approaches, and practices.

## Strategy 6.2 Articulate the benefits of watershed protection and restoration for climate resiliency

Many OWEB-funded watershed protection and restoration projects promote climate resiliency, whether through riparian plantings that help cool streams, floodplain restoration that helps to limit high flows, or juniper removal leading to increased soil moisture and water availability in shrublands and grasslands. Under this strategy, we will clearly demonstrate the ways in which OWEB-funded watershed protection and restoration projects promote climate adaptation and resilience, disaster risk reduction, and long-term carbon sequestration and storage. We will focus on articulating climate-related benefits of commonly funded project types across different ecosystems so that our partners, board, and the interested public have a better understanding of how on-the-ground watershed protection and restoration projects contribute to a more resilient Oregon in the face of climate change.

### PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

In the next 2 years develop an engagement strategy that demonstrates how ongoing OWEB-funded watershed protection and restoration contributes to climate adaptation and resilience, improves native fish and wildlife habitats, and demonstrates how this work maintains working landscapes and facilitates carbon sequestration.

### CORE ACTIVITIES

- Continue to work with ODOE and the Oregon Climate Action Commission (OCAC) on Natural and Working Lands (NWL) initiative, providing data about restoration activities to contribute to carbon sequestration inventory. *Annually*
- Administer NWL funds for on-the-ground support of climate adaptation and resilience by funding additional projects that have direct adaptation and resilience benefits via Open Solicitation and OAHF grants. *Starting 2024*
- Provide tools consistent with the [climate resources](#) on OWEB's website to applicants/grantees that are easy to use and relevant to a range of projects funded by the agency. This activity will include updating the existing resources with current information and adding new resources as they become more readily accepted and accessible (e.g., carbon calculator). *Ongoing*
- Demonstrate on our website, at conferences, TRS, or other methods how OWEB funds projects that promote adaptation and resilience for both ecosystems and human communities (e.g., conserve water through irrigation water management, improved grazing management practices, or improved stream and floodplain conditions as a few examples). *Ongoing*
- Showcase examples through various engagement tactics that demonstrate how OWEB funded projects can help promote disaster risk reduction (e.g., attenuate high flood flows through floodplain reconnection, reduce wildfire risk through forest health treatments, contribute to food security through water conservation, and provide water quality benefits that help both native species and humans via drinking water quality). *Ongoing*

### KEY OUTCOMES

- Regional review teams, OWEB staff and grantees are grounded in OWEB's available climate resources and promote the benefits for climate resilience.
- Increased common understanding about the climate benefits resulting from OWEB projects among producers, land managers, and restoration practitioners.
- Oregonians have a greater understanding of the benefits of watershed restoration for climate resilience.





## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis OWEB Staff Focus Groups

### Summary of Themes

#### Strengths

- Staff dedication to the mission
- Staff is effective and stable
- Staff is competent
- Staff engages well with partners
- Positive relationships with partners
- Customer service is strong
- Adaptability of OWEB
- OWEB trusted as partner
- Progress toward DEI

#### Weaknesses

- Too many requirements
- Complication of systems
- Needing for simplicity
- Technological resources are limited and antiquated
- Prioritization of needs is not entirely clear
- Workload is high
- Communication with partners is challenging
- Processes are occasionally redundant
- Increasing opportunity to serve
- New programs without capacity to administer them
- Lack of staff capacity
- Lack of focus

#### Opportunities

- Develop adaptive grant programming that can incorporate different funding sources
- Reduce the number of grant programs
- Streamline funding requirements
- Increase funding to rise to the opportunities
- Explore public-private partnerships to leverage funding
- Increase opportunities for outreach and new partner development
- Regular check-ins with partners
- Improve communication and collaboration among staff
- Leverage federal money
- Begin to work with more agencies
- Provide DEI learning opportunities
- Increase programming

## Threats

- Staff gaps in knowledge
- Not deep bench strength
- Need improved communication with legislative body
- Taking on too much and overwhelming staff
- Employee burnout
- Lack of staff capacity
- Tending toward bureaucracy
- Mission creep
- Difficulty staying focused
- Knowledge management and transfer
- Need for succession planning
- Funding model is problematic
- Threats to future funding – crises, economic downturns, etc.

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis OWEB Community and Partner Interviews

### Summary of Themes

#### STRENGTHS

##### A. Trusted and trustworthy

- Strong integrity of the grant solicitation, review and award process.
- OWEB's role as a non-regulatory funder is important and places us in an important role as facilitator for difficult conversations.
- OWEB as a non-regulatory agency carries a lot of weight, people support OWEB and agency has earned trust through the people that work at the agency and process for funding projects in a manner that does not have a regulatory bent.

##### B. Operational strength

- The fiscal/turnaround on grants is something that OWEB excels at.
- Doing business at a watershed level has always been a strength.
- Having locals involved in review teams is critical, as is having RPRs.
- Really good at managing the distribution of multiple funding programs.
- Reliability, predictability, and flexibility of funding
- Getting money on the ground for meaningful projects. In some ways it's the process that's special and unique – without the process, money wouldn't be getting on the ground in the right way.
- Awareness and attention to issues
- OWEB has been very well organized in getting new FIPs off the ground.
- Reimbursements and distribution of funds is timely and the systems improvements (moving to online) are appreciated, though take time to get used to.

##### C. Strong human and relational dynamic

- Relationships are good in his region, at least mutual respect if not agreement. Really likes having the local person involved.
- Personal relationships are good, feels that he can talk to folks at OWEB openly. OWEB is in good hands with staff.
- Human dynamic is good.
- Views OWEB as partner oriented and sees strong relationships.
- Relationships that have extended beyond the grantee/granting agency relationship and into trusted colleagues.
- Staff are fantastic and treat partners with respect and as true partners

##### D. Quality and competence

- When things like 'capacity' investments are questioned, OWEB staff are quick to respond as they are knowledgeable. Not overspending on council support
- OWEB understands funding needs and has created a strategic approach to leveraging not only the state dollars, but other investments like federal resources, philanthropic resources through FIPs.
- OWEB understands science.
- Expertise of staff in both the acquisition and restoration work.

**E. Partnership oriented**

- OWEB's response is never punitive when things go wrong in implementation or a partner makes a mistake – if encounter a problem, OWEB staff try to help find a solution and get to “yes.”
- OWEB understands partnerships very well, understands some collaboration and understands science delivery.
- Open communication and key staff to contact was very important. “You guys are pretty efficient about your mission and getting it done. And you were coachable. We weren't concerned about asking you questions because everybody wanted to make sure that program work. It was flawless on our end.”

**F. Solution-focused**

- Dedication of RPRs and partnership coordinators shows a problem-solving attitude and true attempts to understand the work of the partners in their region and what it takes to implement a project in their region.
- Responsive to project specific challenges and solution oriented.
- Problem-solving approach to helping move things forward.

**G. Responsive and adaptive**

- Process oriented and has built a process that works but is always learning and adjusting when needed. Listens to partner feedback and while doesn't always make immediate changes, demonstrates that the agency is listening.
- FSFS grant program was extremely responsive. “It was there when I needed it. We weren't quite sure how it was going to work when it was all set up, we had not worked with OWEB before. Then OWEB showed up and had everything worked out as far as providing funding for growers. And that was a critical time for us, it was a tough time for everybody. And you guys were responsive and helped producers get grants and that sort of thing when they remain in business.”
- Blown away by how much OWEB has been willing to work with grantees to make things make sense
- OWEB does a good job supporting adaptive management which is needed for restoration practitioners (citing examples such as: climate change, natural disasters, changes to permitting/compliance).

**H. Present, attentive, and involved**

- Feels seen by OWEB
- Regional knowledge is important – having the regional folks located in the region is important
- OWEB's really in tuned with what's happening with watershed councils.
- OWEB staff willing to attend/participate in local meetings where partners are discussing issues - that level of involvement is really helpful
- OWEB staff proactively reach out to talk about what's going on/check in

**I. Strategic**

- Really impressed by OWEB taking a strategic approach to conservation instead of random acts of conservation.
- Creating new programs to address changing or emergent needs -- like wildfire and drought relief.
- OWEB takes a holistic approach to statewide restoration (rightful approach vs. shotgun approach). In particular, the FIPs are doing a great job of this.
- OWEB's role as a non-regulatory, volunteer-driven conservation agency allows for broader restoration to occur (less messy political entanglements).
- OWEB is thoughtfully moving forward as an agency and does an excellent job getting money on the ground with competing needs.
- OWEB is one of the few funders offering organizations mid-to-long term investments instead of one-off projects, the FIP in the community changed the trajectory of the partnership and the work that is able to be accomplished in the community.

**J. Building shared commitment and coalitions**

- Unique position to help form positive relationships between state government and local communities.
- OWEB is trusted and competent, and collaborative.
- OWEB works well with partners, the people at OWEB are a reason for optimism.
- Ability to be part of multi-agency partnerships that strategically leverages different funding sources.
- OWEB has an integral role in the state of habitat restoration and helping work be completed by partners and ensuring partners have a steady cash flow over time.
- Value of OWEB is in reconnecting with land base and restoring systems that are vital to making local communities great. Restorative efforts are best in keeping community needs in mind.

**K. Clarity and transparency**

- Transparency of review process: timelines, how review process works, comments are shared with grant applicants
- Relationship with the staff - knowing that if she has a problem, it is totally ok to call
- OWEB staff encourage open lines of communication, meaningfully understand grantee concerns and willing to find ways to make things work for everyone (OWEB and grantee)

**L. Quality staff**

- Continuity and dedication of staff. OWEB staff know their grantees and what they do/their work. Because there's not as much turnover of OWEB staff, it makes their [grantee] job that much easier - OWEB staff really know and care about the programs.
- Ability to recruit, hire, and retain good, experienced staff – whatever OWEB is doing to create a good working environment where staff stay and new staff want to work there, keep doing that.
- Staff is great to work with and very open to conversation and dialog.
- Dedication of OWEB board and staff

**WEAKNESSES****A. Limitations of resources**

- Not enough money. Recognized that hard choices must be made in what projects to fund. However, this leads to some very good projects that will never be implemented because not all projects can wait until another cycle.
- OWEB doesn't have the same large cash flow that other organizations or agencies have (citing Farm Bill and NRCS as examples), and likely never will be able to compete with those programs.
- Producers want to know about whether there could be another funding source or grant program like FSFS in the future.

**B. Burdensome processes**

- Frustration with questions in applications that don't always have a clear reason for why they are asked and what value they add/how the answer will factor into the project evaluation.
- OWEB's grant process is slow and time consuming especially if you don't get funded.
- FIP process is confusing.
- Red tape, it would be nice to evaluate how to streamline processes and look for improvements.
- Applications are very long and burdensome for both applicants and reviewers. Would like to see a more streamlined approach that focuses only on the areas that are needed for review teams to form technical feedback for funding recommendations.
- Process, from applications, to DOJ, lots of process
- Time and effort required for grant applications and reporting requirements.

**C. Limitations of engagement and awareness of local context**

- Could do a better job staying abreast/aware of emerging issues from grantee perspective (e.g., FEMA floodplain issues, permitting, federal funding nexus/opportunities)
- Some of the barriers to tribal engagement and ownership around acquisitions.
- Communicating with non-English-speaking communities.

**D. Lack of flexibility**

- Concern that OWEB will be flexible to help grantees work through COVID related Supply chain issues and delays
- Post COVID it is also more challenging to get the right partners on board; landowner relations take a lot of work; there are a lot of things competing for their time.

**E. Need greater emphasis on monitoring and evaluation**

- It will be important to continue with offering monitoring funding.
- OWEB can take a more active role in tracing the steps of who's being hired to do the on the ground restoration work after the \$ has been awarded. There should be a better understanding how contractors are being hired by the partner that you award money to, what their procurement procedures are, how contracts are being awarded (Are they doing those under a best value?)

**F. Gap in awareness and outreach**

- Schools like to participate in restoration, especially if they have a creek anywhere on their campus. It's important to fund these efforts somehow.
- Outreach to communities. Increase the diversity in our constituents and the trust communities have in OWEB/state government via increased outreach to those with little or no experience working with us.

**G. Need to demonstrate progress and tell the story**

- Demonstrating the success of OWEB investments to meet broader statewide goals
- Quantifying benefits of voluntary actions
- We should highlight the human/public health connection to our work as much as possible when presenting to the legislature.
- Leverage the story of how we help communities to garner support for our programs.

**H. Disagreement with priorities**

- Sometimes OWEB forgets that we're not a fish agency, but a watershed agency. Biggest beef with OWEB is lack of clarity of why projects recommended for funding but fall below the funding line.
- Lack of a priority-based approach for statewide conservation, particularly around fish and habitat projects. Feels this stems from a lack of interagency coordination and needs to extend beyond the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds.
- Lack of focus on water conservation and climate-related priorities. While OWEB's water acquisition program attempts to help in this area, it does not go far enough to be effective (cites water transfers and leasing as being important components for OWEB to focus on).

**I. Need greater attention to knowledge management**

- Documenting institutional knowledge over time – some things get lost and the lessons and improvements that could be part of that is hard to carry forward when folks aren't on the same page/it gets lost altogether. Especially evident in times of staff transition.

**J. Regional inflexibility and out**

- In the old days, locals seemed like they had a say in what the priorities are. Now, it's more board driven and less from the region.
- Understanding how changes may impact certain geographies when trying to implement Board adopted policy.

**K. Lack of staff capacity**

- Not enough employees to have a consistent presence at partners' tables. OWEB's presence and input would be appreciated.
- OWEB needs some additional staffing and capacity within the FIP program and perhaps across the organization. It seems like a small group of people are taking care of a lot of needs across the state.
- OWEB needs to be bolder in making requests for more budget and more capacity.
- Staff are time limited and governance structures do not always lend well to quick response and innovation.

**L. Need greater focus on capacity funding**

- OWEB does it better than most, but more investments in capacity for communities would be appreciated
- Capacity-building should be more widespread among grant offerings as this is often the area that on-the-ground practitioners get stuck, and work is unable to proceed.

**M. Improve ability to meet needs of all in community**

- OWEB began addressing DEI needs but needs to continue to grow. Still work to do to connect with diverse audiences.
- DEI internally, engage Tribes more.

**OPPORTUNITIES****A. Facilitate peer learning**

- Use the OWEB platform to share lessons learned/highlight partner work to facilitate peer learning regarding project implementation and design
- Continue to help entities connect with experts and other natural resource professionals in their area that can lead to more work getting done on the ground and more money for projects

**B. Provide more training and support**

- Provide direct training/support for new coordinators/management/board members (WCs, Land Trusts)
- OWEB could increase investment in and support for adaptive management (and work with grantees to develop a shared understanding of what adaptive management looks like and the best way to fund it.)
- Could do better checking in with grantees on emerging issues from their perspective and how OWEB can support/help
- OWEB is "our" [WCs] agency – because of this, WCs look to OWEB for guidance and support and, in some cases, could use more (e.g., training and resources for new WC coordinators/board members)

**C. Catalyze federal funding**

- Getting more federal funds into the state:
- Engage in FEMA floodplain discussion since it impacts the cost of projects, timing. WCs could use agency support in this and bring a bit more weight to the conversations and movement forward.

**D. Educate communities**

- Help communities understand the risks facing them and best practices about restoration and conservation as these relate to climate change.
- Communicating economic benefit of restoration in small rural communities.
- Landowners and community members don't always understand the OWEB funding source.

**E. Strategically engage communities**

- Strategically engage communities and deliver funding in areas after regulatory standards are set, (TMDL, ag water quality, drinking water)
- OWEB can help inform small communities, increase their access to funding, and increase capacity to help fund things such as water infrastructure.
- Keep staff working in local communities.
- OWEB has a great opportunity to help work with landowners and other community partners to gain their trust and support for projects.

**F. Pursue further DEI implications**

- Ensuring that when money is awarded for restoration work, that the people who are actually doing the on the ground work (often it's the Latino/Latinx workforce) are receiving equitable pay have health and safety in the workplace (Lomakatsi has the Promotora program, which is a forest/restoration worker health and safety program which could be looked at as an example).
- Thinking through how DEI considerations are applied in less diverse rural areas.
- Local Watershed councils and SWCDs to reach out to marginalized communities
- In the future offer Specific grants for tribes and historically marginalized communities

**G. Leverage other funding opportunities**

- OWEB dollars can be leveraged with other funding opportunities to create durable change on Oregon's landscapes.
- Federal grants. Look towards agency partners for inspiration in federal funding opportunities.
- Federal dollars create partnership opportunities that we haven't had before.
- Leverage additional funding

**H. Pursue monitoring and evaluation of outcomes**

- Identify, recruit and fund capable partners to perform monitoring to demonstrate outcomes
- Help applicants understand what OWEB is looking for in terms of "outcomes" vs "actions"
- Perform an assessment to identify barriers with marginalized communities and develop solutions to help diversify who our grantees are.

**I. Implement more expansive programs**

- Creative thinking to implement bigger projects now that low hanging fruit is gone

**J. Strengthen partnerships**

- Strengthen strategic partner role
- Continue to build relationships and understanding of the partners and their work across the state to help good work get done
- Make sure that the work of the watershed councils and OWEB are aligned with other partners (

**K. Expand eligibility**

- Expand who the funds could be administered by, i.e. who is eligible to receive/apply for certain grants – often land trusts and SWCDs are specifically named as entities to be eligible for certain funds and there is a missed opportunity to also support watershed councils that have demonstrated professionalism and effectiveness

**L. Build institutional knowledge management**

- Building institutional knowledge collectively with the partners and the culture of carrying information forward into new projects



**M. Advance tribal engagement**

- Consider a different approach with tribal engagement - where the program is led by tribal members, both in senior leadership and technical. Trying to center a lot of this work around indigenous communities would be very beneficial in thinking about OWEB's overall mission of treating landscapes, taking care of these ecosystems.
- A gap we often see is state agencies will want to deal directly with tribal governments, which is very important that GTG relationship. There's room for OWEB to increase their understanding of how to work with tribes in a meaningful way.
- Continue to build on OWEB's work with tribal communities and DEI efforts. Bring more funding in to these groups to create more opportunities. Funding set aside for tribes would be helpful to help tribes recover land – it's hard for tribes to compete in the open market.

**N. Increase capacity and retention of quality staff**

- Continue to retain good staff and encourage new hires that are additive to the organization; maintain the positive environment so people want to work at OWEB.
- Be candid on our staffing needs.
- Cross-training and sustainable staffing
- Increase the capacity of the staff, increase the budget.

**O. Ensure opportunity for responsive and adaptive management**

- Continue to be flexible to meet the needs of various watersheds throughout Oregon; continue being responsive to needs
- Enable partners to adaptive management. We're always changing, the landscape changes, conditions and opportunities change, so having more flexibility with longer grant agreements would be very beneficial.
- Overall, we can do better at adaptive management by using good data to inform actions.

**P. Strengthen partnerships**

- Partners feel comfortable working with OWEB staff and feel like staff are effective and invested in the successful implementation of projects. (it is not just a job for staff and OWEB is not just a grantor of funds)
- OWEB is a convener of conversations and helps bridge the gap between the regulatory requirements and voluntary efforts.
- Align OWEB with urban forestry movement.
- Mutual collaboration. Share granting experience with other agencies.
- Exploration of private-public partnerships (or non-profits) to diversify available funding opportunities.
- Scale up, continue to evolve and bolster shared stewardship programs, like FIP; increase more of that collaborative landscape scale look. FIPS are an anchor of significant state investment and are so important to scaling these landscapes and ecosystem resiliency projects.
- OWEB has come a long way with FIP in bringing partnerships to the table; can continue to expand on this and bring more tribes to the table. The feds are looking for co-leadership to address strategic priorities, particularly in partnering with tribes or minority groups. Engage in MOAs that provide for long-term or joint funding opportunities.
- FIP, partnerships, the support for partnerships, the increased presence of strategic action plans to support restoration and conservation.

**Q. Keep climate resiliency in focus.**

- Climate resiliency and water conservation are program areas that are needed and should be considered for priority focus.
- As a state agency, OWEB can respond to Climate Change, especially with its impacts to fish, and other water and drought issues. Upper watersheds can be restored to increase water availability. With long term planning and budgeting, fish, agriculture, and forestry will benefit. This will be a big issue for the latter half of the century. We need to slow down water to replace snowpack losses. Glad that OWEB exists to help Oregon do this.

- We can be the most effective agency to enact local change in communities most impacted by climate change. The drought and wildfire recovery program has worked and continues to work well. As climate impacts worsen and become more frequent, salmonid habitat restoration efforts will be more necessary than ever.
- Highlight our fire response work more. Fire is at the forefront of our constituents' minds. Highlight this when talking with legislature, when talking with partners, and look for opportunity to expand upon this work. It will continue to be relevant.

#### **R. Provide convening and collaborative role**

- Hub for connecting the dots among agencies and programs. Gap in agency leadership for collaborative dialogue at policy level.
- A big part of OWEB's work is working with grassroots partners, both old and new partners. Segments of the BIPOC community have an increasing interest in water but may need help with the capacity to engage in water planning.

#### **S. Increase profile and expand impact**

- OWEB can increase its scope and size to do more and have the capacity to do more. OWEB has the expertise and experience working with watersheds and many communities, and can be bolder, increasing its role in multiple aspects of the water space. OWEB can promote what it does now, and what it isn't doing now but could achieve in the future.
- OWEB can increase the state's focus on natural resources, educating and informing on how rehabilitated watersheds can benefit the state functionally and ecologically. OWEB can easily step up and achieve more if provided with the capacity to do so.
- Can leverage trust with those apprehensive of government where other agencies are more challenged.

#### **T. Increase funding**

- Think even broader than three biennia in programs like FIP, these can be multi-decade issues that require investment
- If different funding was provided to OWEB (e.g., General Fund), the agency could do more on issues like irrigation modernization
- Would like OWEB to have double the amount of funding to provide as grants, along with double the staff to administer the funding
- Lots of opportunities on the horizon with additional funding and engaging in diverse partnerships, building on FIPs, will push OWEB to a new place in the future.

### **THREATS**

#### **A. Drift in the focus of funding**

- Focus should be on aquatic critters and water quality. Understands the reasons for the "drift" to uplands, but wants to see the funding grow proportionally to make sure there is still a major amount of funding available for the aquatic need

#### **B. Climate Change**

- How to factor in climate change. Climate will impact all the streams and fisheries. Need to maintain/ increase the amount of riparian restoration going on, even in places that aren't necessarily dammed.
- Climate change, changes in market dynamics

#### **C. Length of time to see impact**

- It takes a long time (10 years minimum) to be able to really quantify the outcomes from restoration investments
- There is a lot of variability in ecological systems, and we are looking for subtle changes. Variability increasing/difficult to determine "baseline" as the climate changes.

**D. Limitations in staff engagement**

- Staff not engaging with partners in meaningful ways and not developing relationships with partners.
- Staff assume an auditor or “police” role.

**E. Perils of centralized decision-making**

- Concern that decision making is happening at levels removed from the local regions

**F. Lack of connection to DEI among rural communities**

- DEI specific funding goals can get lost in translation especially in rural communities and feel exclusive. Not all areas have culturally specific organizations eligible to apply for OWEB funding. In rural communities, you typically have one org that represents and work with all ethnic groups and walks of life.

**G. Lack of staff capacity**

- Like the opportunity above, OWEB needs to continue to be candid on our needs in order to perform.
- Staff and leadership turnover may lead to missteps due to lack of knowledge and understanding of historical relationships and context.
- Staff are overcommitted and lose the time to engage with local partners.

**H. Lack of diversity in OWEB staff/board**

- Lack of communication with particular (unspecified) communities, lack of diversity in leadership/board/staff. Would benefit from added outreach to these communities, emphasis on relationship building. This could be catalyzed by diversity in staff.

**I. Onerous processes**

- Worry that billing process, application process will become too onerous so that it won't be worth pursuing OWEB funding anymore (e.g., take too much detail and time to prepare invoices)

**J. Lack of diversification**

- Diversification of funding is needed; an over-reliance on federal funding risks not meeting the on-the-ground conservation needs.

**K. Distracting projects**

- As OWEB takes on more specialty programs (e.g., Oregon Ag Heritage), it becomes harder to stay on track and make efficient use of limited funds.
- Staying committed to making sure we're moving the needle on fish, wildlife, and their habitat at the watershed scale (at the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> HUC) and making sure we are funding the right projects in the right places.
- Shifting from holistic, durable change on the landscape to a more piecemeal approach to conservation and restoration.

**L. Restrictive funding**

- Placing too many restrictions on funding; there needs to be a balance between being a responsible grantor and having so many restrictions and stipulations that the funding is too much of a burden for local partners to utilize.

**M. Capacity limitations**

- Capacity limitations of implementation organizations, contractors, etc. who implement the restoration and conservation work. Need for workforce development. Lack of leadership within agencies or with executive branch can stall innovation and collaboration. Funding shortfalls and unfunded mandates.

**N. Scope limitations**

- Constitutional and statute constraints limit OWEB's scope.

**O. Precarious source of funding**

- Having lottery as a primary source of funding – need to continue seeking other sources, such as we have for wildfire restoration.

**P. Prohibitive costs of projects**

- Costs of restoration supersedes OWEB's capacity to fund.

**Q. Discontinued projects**

- OWEB has funded projects that are not being maintained, particularly in eastern OR. Things like cattle exclusion. Not sure what the solution is. There is no robust enforcement efforts.

**ADDITIONAL THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS****A. Importance of staff connection to people**

- Dedication and commitment of staff to agency mission and what we do
- Strong value on the relationships with OWEB staff, frequently commented that success at navigating challenges and successes with grants could be due to the long-term relationship with RPR and others at OWEB

**B. Importance of capacity funding**

- Glue that keeps the system together. Capacity funding \*and\* project funding is incredibly important. OWEB's assistance is needed to understand climate impacts and best practices. More collaborative funding structures.

**C. Importance of communication and broad awareness**

- Find ways to engage with educators/schools regarding Broad Awareness of the value of restoration.
- Engage with landowners/ranchers; OWEB uses Lottery funds (not the same as a tax), determined by statewide vote. Need to get this message out; people don't understand and assume the funding is from a tax. Reach landowners directly with this message.

**D. Importance of monitoring funding**

- Monitoring funding has been valuable; would be good to find ways to continue supporting this.

**E. Importance of convening**

- OWEB helps convene and facilitate larger policy conversations and has the funding leverage to bring groups to the table.

**F. Importance of listening**

- The OWEB model is effective as it was set up-trust those that are closest to the natural resource issues and the OWEB Board should continue to listen to what is happening in the regions. OWEB staff is responsive and recent operational improvements have been great.

**G. Importance of being present**

- Presence of regionally based staff that are project managers (RPRs) is very valuable – shows support of the work and communities and an investment in collective success.
- Putting in the work at many levels of the agency to be onsite and present across the state says a lot about the respect the agency has for its partners and those implementing the projects. Keeping that a priority is encouraged.

**H. Importance of being flexible**

- Flexibility and problem-solving approach is valuable and helps get to successful implementation of projects on the ground
- More flexibility with grant agreement terms (longer than a biennium) to allow for changes/adaptive mgmt.

**I. Importance of staff capacity**

- Increase OWEB staff/capacity to allow for increased workload and allow for new programs to be introduced.
- Scale up, continue to evolve and bolster shared stewardship programs, like FIP.
- Lack of capacity, can't keep adding new grant programs with same amount of staff

**J. Importance of tribal engagement**

- Consider a different approach with tribal engagement and the partners that they work with.
- Add more tribal partnerships into our work; engage each tribe in this SP update. See if tribes can play a larger role.

**K. Importance of reliability and consistency**

- Reliable, predictable, flexible funding

**L. Importance of responsiveness**

- Agency is responsive and flexible

**M. Importance of thinking at scale**

- As OWEB continues to develop, thought should be given to how we can best utilize funding to produce the greatest conservation outcomes in the widest scale possible.

**N. Importance of collaboration**

- Creating forums for collaboration, leverage OWEB funding, coordination with tribal/indigenous programs, providing innovation of climate work, OWEB as a hub.
- Work with other state agencies to coordinate on accessing federal funding.
- Continue expanding partnerships as much as possible – OWEB can be conduit for additional funding from outside sources.
- Continue dialogue with partners and make best use of funding that rewards strategic partnerships

**O. Importance of supporting small communities**

- Help smaller communities access federal funding by providing capacity support and state match.

**P. Importance of being bold**

- OWEB needs to boldly request to the governor's office and to the legislature that OWEB needs more funding and capacity to do its work and to increase its scope.
- OWEB has the expertise and the trust of much of Oregon and can do more to help Oregon address Climate Change and water scarcity issues for fish, farms, and communities.

**Q. Importance of engaging BIPOC communities**

- Help promote new partnerships and capacity within BIPOC communities that are getting more engaged with water issues.

**R. Importance of stability**

- Need to maintain our institutional history and knowledge among board members and staff so OWEB doesn't veer off the track we're on.

## Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE) Factors Analysis

### OWEB Staff Focus Groups

#### Summary of Themes

##### Political

- DEI topics not always well-received
- OR is politically split
- Less visibility of OWEB due to other state agencies
- OWEB is taking on additional work due to reputation
- BABA act will increase project costs and timelines
- Unpredictability of legislature
- Political divisiveness throughout the state
- Anti-government sentiment

##### Economic

- Pre-pandemic projects are using budgets that are no longer feasible in the current market
- Not enough people in trade industries
- Difficult to recruit staff
- Economic variables are constantly in flux
- Inflation impacts grantees
- Property prices are rising
- Competition for personnel
- More expensive to run operations

##### Social

- Inability to engage youth
- Prioritization of natural resources over social issues (e.g., housing)
- Public outreach is challenges given the diversity of languages spoken in OR
- OWEB is better at engaging people with a technical background than the public
- DEI work has made a significant impact on OWEB
- Eligible partners are limited
- Population in OR is increasing
- Reliable sources of information are not always accessible to the public
- Difficulties doing urban projects
- Aging farming community

##### Technological

- Local partners don't take advantage of OWEB's training
- Technology is seen as a cure for society's issues
- OWEB tech is no compatible with agency needs
- There are a lot of unseen barriers to technology solutions

- Do we need more mobile platforms?
- Ability to do work virtually
- Availability of drones and LIDAR increases ability to monitor sites and collect data
- Virtual connections allow for quicker work

### Legal

- BABA Act is hard on local partners
- Different funding sources have different stipulations and regulatory requirements
- Source water protection is going to bring more regulatory burden
- Grantees have different thresholds and ability to adapt to changing regulatory requirements
- EMA floodplain CLOMR is becoming more challenging and costly
- Section 106 requirements will increase project costs and timelines
- Water rights laws need updating
- Legislative initiatives weighed against M76 can create legal issues

### Environmental

- Climate change is rapid
- Climate criteria puts burdens on applicants and review teams
- OWEB's role will likely expand to address the needs posed by natural disasters
- Wildfires are on the rise
- Communities need to be more resilient to climate change
- Salmon species are facing extinction
- OR is suffering tree mortality
- Grasslands have transitioned to annual grass
- Potential for big earthquake

## SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

## APPENDIX D

## OWEB Survey Response Summary

Respondents were invited to provide additional comments for each of the strategic priorities of OWEB. The following are the salient and representative areas of comment:

### Broad Awareness

- Remote areas of the state may get overlooked or underrepresented
- Encouragement about OWEB being on social media
- Regional reps are informed and engaged
- Watersheds have less visibility than “firesheds”
- Lack of statewide “we all live in a watershed” awareness campaigns
- Broad awareness is not the highest priority
- Concern that upland projects are not as important as riparian areas or instream
- Lack of funding for outreach and awareness

### Diversity of Oregonians

- In rural or remote areas, opportunities for diversity are limited
- OWEB is not in highly urbanized areas where diversity is the highest
- My region of Oregon lacks diversity
- Watershed councils and SWCDs are increasingly attending to diversity
- OWEB makes a realistic effort in this area but it is difficult
- Concern that OWEB staff is not more diverse
- Recognize focus on tribes, but concern about funding to engage other groups
- OWEB’s commitment to EDI work seems ambiguous

### Community Capacity and Strategic Partnerships

- OWEB has increased community action
- OWEB appears to be very supportive of community partnerships
- Not sure what “community capacity” means
- Partnerships are key to achieving healthy watersheds
- Multi-county CREP and other partnership efforts is paying off
- Seeing multiple agencies working together
- Strategic partnerships in sparsely populated areas are limited
- Need to support urban watershed projects

### Diverse and Stable Funding

- Needing more capacity
- OWEB is responsive to funding needs across programmatic areas
- Funding allocations and needs may not always be well represented in more remote areas
- Not all watershed groups are funded. Desire for a wider breadth of organizations to receive funding
- Some orgs have access; others do not
- Council coordinators are underpaid
- FIP has worked very well for providing stable project funding
- Capacity funding seems very stable.
- OWEB is not yet leveraging foundation funding



- More could be done by OWEB to leverage the total grant funds available
- No support for smaller organizations with capacity building

### Working Lands

- Possible over-emphasis on working lands so that smaller, underrepresented, or marginalized groups have not been integrated
- Working lands are becoming less of a priority for OWEB
- This is an area that need to be better supported with a greater level of understanding
- This is a challenging priority
- Owners of working lands have become more engaged in addressing watershed health in the last 5 years
- “Working lands” is a challenging concept at the intersection of indigenous lands
- OWEB is trying, but recent funding for ag working lands did not reflect comparative ag value (instead reflecting political goal of spreading funds throughout the state)
- Strong start with working lands program
- Too much emphasis on fish and stream restoration; needs to be greater appreciation of projects that can benefit farms and ranches
- This area is still a work in progress
- Not at the level it could be

### Coordinated Monitoring

- OWEB is very supportive
- Very challenging to do
- Monitoring is usually multi-season and multi-year commitment
- This is key for iterative learning
- OWEB makes every effort to ensure monitoring is done without duplication of effort
- We need more monitoring
- It may be a bit much for some
- Monitoring is improving but needs more consistent funding and expectations
- Much of the shared learning has focused on the FIP program
- I would like to see more
- Haven’t seen much coordination
- Need specific ongoing funding for monitoring and assessment

### Bold and Innovative Actions

- My impression is that OWEB is doing all it can
- Grant programs are responsive
- Get rid of climate change ranking
- I think OWEB could do more to exert more influence upward and laterally with other agencies
- Bold is not a word that is associated with OWEB. Innovative sometimes, but usually as a part of larger partnerships.
- Look into what more can be done to support land conservancy orgs
- I don’t see “bold,” but I do see some innovation
- Not sure what “bold and innovative actions have been tried.
- Don’t really see anything new

### In what ways has OWEB had the greatest positive impact throughout Oregon?

- Achieve stable grant processes
- Acting as a clearinghouse for funds

- Broadly addressing basic watershed needs throughout the state
- Consistency – investment, support, technical expertise
- Educational opportunities
- Spreading the word that watershed health is part of being an Oregonian
- Stemming the tide of negative environmental change
- Strong grant process
- Supporting customers

#### **How might OWEB improve its impact in the future?**

- Adaptive projects responding to current science and monitoring data
- Additional funding to purchase and protect key properties
- Targeted investment in environmental equity and justice
- More in tune with grassroots
- Increase funding to match increased costs
- Consider benefits beyond aquatic wildlife
- Guard against mission creep
- Continue to focus on tribal integration
- Continue funding
- Continue to listen
- Continue emphasis on small grants
- Create pathway for smaller landowners
- Don't overcomplicate
- Focus less on political agendas and more on projects
- Practice fair, non-biased grant selection process
- Include post wildfire restoration as one of its ecological priorities
- Increase education about what is happening ecologically in people's basins
- Improve funding for innovation
- Give attention to large-scale public outreach and educational strategies
- Improve engagement with urban areas
- Streamline application and reporting

#### **What is your greatest hope for OWEB and watershed work of the next 3-5 years?**

- Greater synchronicity between water and land
- Strong focus on water security for fish, wildlife, Oregonians
- Be more locally oriented
- Continue to adapt to address climate change
- Continue support for watershed protection
- Have a combination of restoration work between instream, riparian, and upland
- More positive recognition in our communities
- Better river health
- Increased funding for agency, monitoring, and grantees
- Communicate intensively; increase awareness of every Oregonian
- Develop great understanding and appreciation for how upland treatments benefit watersheds
- That OWEB does not slip further toward risk avoidance
- More climate resilient systems for ecological, social, and economic health
- Keep up the good work