

## **Preliminary Summary – Bend Council Support Listening Session, December 6, 2012**

OWEB is holding Council Support Listening Sessions around the state to gather stakeholder feedback about proposed changes to council support grants. OWEB's Board will consider stakeholder feedback before making decisions in 2014. No decisions have been made at this point. A report of all sessions will be shared with stakeholders in January 2013. The report will include all notes, including Survey Monkey comments and small group discussion notes. Councils at the Pacific City session asked OWEB to share information after each session is complete. The final report will be more detailed.

Tom Byler, OWEB Executive Director, thanked everyone for their thoughts and participation in the listening sessions. Oregon's local cooperative conservation is unique and watershed councils have been key to success. OWEB capacity funding has been important to this success. With permanent funding under Measure 76, OWEB needs to think long-term. This is an opportunity to improve the council support program. OWEB needs to evolve and improve and make changes in a thoughtful and informed manner. OWEB has proposed ideas but it is not a done deal. We want to hear from you, your thoughts are important.

OWEB's power point presentation covered: 1) Why OWEB is proposing changes, 2) A future vision for council capacity, 3) What are the proposed changes and how they support the future vision.

Participants then moved into three discussion groups. Each discussion group reported back to the full group. Notes were taken on flip charts and computer.

### **Key themes from group discussions (the final report will be more detailed)**

#### Blue Group

- An alternative idea: Have each of OWEB's six regions draw its own map based on criteria set by OWEB. Distribute capacity funding equally, 1/6 to each region. In region with more councils, each council would get less and in regions with fewer councils, each council would get more.
- The group supported all of the proposed process changes and eligibility changes except for the proposed map of 45 capacity areas.
- Coverage of the whole state by watershed councils is a good goal but not a necessity especially when there is another organization already doing watershed restoration the work.

#### Green Group

- The group thought all of the proposed eligibility criteria is OK except for the proposed map of 45 capacity areas.
- OWEB should continue to fund the current council structure and provide a transition period for councils to figure out scale that works. OWEB should consider additional factors in defining scale, such as hydrology, community, topography, climate, land use, square miles, ecology (ecoregions, endangered species). Look at small grant program MOU model for partnerships.
- OWEB needs to do something about scale, it is important for the future of the watershed movement looking 20-30 years ahead. Be clear that OWEB is not talking about how many councils exist – there is no limit on that. However OWEB doesn't have to invest in all councils that exist, OWEB is determining the structure for its council support investments.

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Tom Byler also thanked the group for their thoughtful participation. We recognize that this is a big issue and that the system is not broken, but it can be improved. There may not be one right answer, but we will consider all of your input and ideas before any decisions are made. This is not a done deal, there is more to be done and more opportunity to provide input.