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REPORT ON
WATERSHED COUNCIL SUPPORT LISTENING SESSIONS
FEBRUARY – MARCH 2010

APRIL 26, 2010

PREPARED FOR:

OREGON WATERSHED ENHANCEMENT BOARD

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SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS FOR HIGH CAPACITY COUNCILS

This report documents the results of six (6) Listening Sessions with watershed council representatives around the state conducted by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) in February and March, 2010. Combined with interviews and an on-line survey, the Listening Sessions were intended to engage watershed councils in a dialogue about what makes watershed councils successful and how OWEB watershed council funding and processes might be changed in order to build capacity, provide base funding and promote strategic partnerships. The Listening Sessions were part of the OWEB Board's strategy to implement its Final Draft Strategic Plan, specifically Strategy 2 under Goal 2.

The focus of the Listening Sessions was watershed council support funding. Because of the importance of this funding to more than 60 councils across the state, it will take time and continued dialogue to develop proposed changes and an understanding of how councils might be affected by those changes. As a result, OWEB is not currently planning to make significant changes to watershed council support for the 2011-2013 watershed council support grant cycle. It is currently contemplated that any significant changes would occur for the 2013 cycle.

Multiple Opportunities for Input

The Listening Sessions were one element of a three-part strategy to obtain input on what makes watershed councils successful, how best to build local capacity and improve the council support funding program, and on priorities for moving forward. The three-part strategy included:

1. *Interviews:* To help frame the agenda for the Listening Sessions, 20 in-person or telephone interviews were conducted with members of the Board's Council Support Subcommittee, the agency's Director and senior grant program staff, regional program representatives, selected watershed council coordinators, and the Director of the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils.
2. *Listening Sessions*: Watershed council coordinators and board members were invited to participate in six Listening Sessions held around the state. Fifty three (53) watershed councils were represented at the Listening Sessions. Representatives from the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, regional program representatives, and senior grant program staff were present at all sessions. The agency's Director

and board members attended five of the six sessions. A list of participants is attached as Appendix B.

3. *On-Line Survey:* An on-line survey provided the opportunity for watershed council coordinators and board members unable to attend the Listening Sessions to provide input on the questions posed at the sessions. It was also an opportunity for Listening Session participants to provide additional comments. Eighteen (18) on-line surveys were completed.

Structured for Dialogue

The Listening Sessions were structured around open dialogue on a common set of questions (see Appendix B) and facilitated by Jim Owens, Principal with Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC. At each session, introductory remarks were provided by the OWEB Director, Tom Byler, or Lauri Aunan, Grant Program Manager. The agenda was organized around five themes/questions, followed by an open conversation on any issue of interest to the participants.

In the introductory remarks, participants were advised that there is no issue more important to OWEB staff and the Board than the success and effectiveness of the work of watershed councils. The work that councils undertake represents the nuts and bolts of the OWEB program. Historically, there has not been enough funding to fully support all watershed councils, but there is a sincere attempt by the staff and Board to attempt to improve the council support funding program. In its strategic planning process over the past year, the Board adopted Goal 5 to: "Support an enduring high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed restoration and conservation." Strategy 2 of that Goal directs the agency to: "Evaluate and adjust watershed council support grant review and funding processes to build local capacity, provide base funding, and promote strategic partnerships." To assist the staff and Board in implementing Goal 5 and Strategy 2, these Listening Sessions were organized to obtain feedback from councils as step 1 of a longer-term effort to carry out strategy 2 to inform Board and staff.

At Listening Sessions, staff and Board members were present to hear from council representatives about how the program can best serve the needs of councils to be successful organizations. The sessions were designed for brainstorming, with no debating on issues and no attempt to reach decisions.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report both summarizes and documents the input from the interviews, Listening Sessions, and on-line survey. Report elements include:

- Summary, including a description of the Listening Session purpose and process, key observations, and an identification of next steps;
- Summary of interview results (Appendix A);
- Listening Session agenda (Appendix B) and roster of attendees (Appendix C);
- Compilation of input from each of the six Listening Sessions (Appendix D);

- Compilation of on-line survey results (Appendix E).

Additional input such as letters and emails received outside of the Listening Sessions, interviews and on-line survey has been integrated into this summary.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

A Most Impressive Commitment

While there is significant diversity among councils in their capacities, sophistication and interests, there is a commonality in commitment to improving watershed health through restoration projects, community outreach, and creative partnerships. Also of note:

- The openness and candor exhibited by Listening Session participants.
- OWEB's efforts to outreach to watershed councils through the Listening Sessions, interviews and on-line survey.
- Board member and staff participation in the Listening Sessions.

Of further note, the areas of commonality and differences in opinion were generally common to all three forms of input, i.e. there was little difference in the comments received at the Listening Sessions and via interviews and on-line surveys. By definition, the discussions at the Listening Sessions were more interactive and the comments via interviews and surveys were more individually in depth. Beyond that, there were no perceivable differences.

Defining and Measuring Success

<u>What does it mean to be a successful watershed council?</u>

The most commonly cited responses to this question in all three of the input venues were: (1) broad community recognition and involvement, and (2) the ability to develop and implement high quality projects that respond to community and watershed needs. A successful watershed council is seen as one that achieves its mission. That mission may include goals for fish and wildlife habitat or water quality improvements, for public education, or for community involvement, or it may include all of these. "A successful watershed council is one that finds a relevant space in their watershed. It is a community of stakeholders that is able to define a vision for their watershed community and resources in a manner that speaks to, connects with and motivates landowners to action and participation in the Oregon Plan." Noted by a number of participants, "Success is more about community involvement then it is miles of restoration." Other frequent responses:

- An ever increasing demand for council services.
- Building a sustainable organization in terms of continuity in staff, board leadership, and partnerships.
- Building strong, ongoing partnerships with local agencies, landowners and other similar organizations.
- Obtaining adequate funding from diverse sources.
- Measurably improving watershed health; seeing changes on the ground.

To be a successful watershed council was summed up as: “Successful watershed councils have credibility in their communities, continuity in knowledge, limited turnover on boards or in staff, and adequate funding to avoid having to constantly raise money.”

It is also frequently noted that success needs to be defined by each council. What is "successful" for one council may not be so for another.

Due primarily to the differences among councils, measuring their success is seen to be very difficult and very subjective. “There are as many answers to the question of how to measure success as there are watershed councils. Every watershed council is different and what works in one is not necessarily going to work in another. We need flexibility to accommodate all those differences. “ “Process is the product. You need to consider how well we are working with the people in our watershed as the key measure of success.”

<u>What would an enduring, high capacity watershed council infrastructure look like?</u>
Such a council would have a secure source of funding sufficient to attract and maintain high quality staff, conduct frequent community outreach, be broadly representative, obtain increasing support from agencies and funders other than OWEB, and have ready access to needed technical and support services.

<u>How can OWEB help watershed councils to be successful?</u>
Providing stable funding and assistance in identifying and developing strategic partnerships are almost universal responses. Also frequently mentioned:

- Increased outreach and education funding.
- More flexibility in the use of project funding to pay for overhead costs.
- In coordination with the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, continuation and expansion of training.
- Support services such as engineering, accounting, auditing.
- Assistance with pooling costs for insurance, legal support, and other similar services that are excessively expensive or difficult to obtain at the individual council level.
- Assistance with permit streamlining.
- Flexibility in fiscal and reporting requirements.

<u>If OWEB funding disappeared tomorrow, what would be the consequences?</u>
Without OWEB funding, well-established councils skilled in partnering would suffer with the reduction in operational support but would expect to be able to recover such funding over time. Smaller and newer councils indicate that they would likely not survive. “Most Councils would probably dissolve and we, as a state, would not meet the vision described in the Oregon Plan. We would also see a major decrease in voluntary restoration efforts by landowners and would need to rely more heavily on regulation to protect our resources.”

Building Local Capacity
<u>How can OWEB help build council capacity?</u>

Although providing consistent funding was a common initial response, most of the conversation focused on support services desired by councils. These include both place-based services (those that are best provided at the local level) versus non-place based services (those that could be provided by OWEB, the Network or though another centralized mechanism). Among the latter: more training, pooled services such as insurance and legal support, and a "toolbox" of on-call technical services, especially auditors, engineers, hydrologists, facilitators. There is also strong support for OWEB assistance in identifying and facilitating strategic partnerships and for being an advocate with regulatory agencies for permit streamlining. Continuing to support the work of the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils is also supported.

<u>Should the number of councils that are funded be limited in order to provide more adequate levels of funding to councils?</u>
Opinion is very mixed about such a limitation. Among the comments:

- Are the councils producing and doing what they were asked to do? If they are, then no you don't eliminate them.
- There would be considerable political fallout if a watershed council is legitimately formed and recognized locally and then not funded by OWEB.
- As a statewide program, it would be inappropriate to restrict the formation of new councils where legitimately established through funding limitations.
- The pie keeps getting cut smaller and smaller with every new council created. Any new council, especially smaller ones, that wants to form should be encouraged to join in with other existing councils rather than establishing even a greater number of councils and diminishing the funds available to existing councils.
- No new councils and no splintering unless the overall funding pie increases.
- OWEB shouldn't dictate who can start a council but at some point it needs to place a limit on how many it can support. A cap on the number of councils that will be funded should be established.
- Councils should have to prove their capacity and potential before they are funded for the first time. It should not be easy to get funded for the first time. That challenge of "proving up" will self select those who won't be successful.
- What's an appropriate limit and what benefit would that give remaining councils? The focus should be on how to get more capacity with alternative funding sources rather than on limiting the number of councils funded.
- It is unhealthy to rely solely on OWEB funding; councils need to be diversified in their funding. Consideration should be given to reducing funding to well-performing councils in order to spread the available funds around a little more.

<u>Should additional financial support continue to be provided to umbrella councils?</u>
While the concept of umbrella councils is seen as a good approach to consolidating services to reduce costs, there is general agreement that the current umbrella "bonus" is not sufficient to be an incentive to form new umbrella councils or retain existing ones. More funding is made available to councils by not becoming members of an umbrella group and by requesting and receiving funding as solo councils. There is also general

agreement that the existing policies on establishing umbrella councils and on whether funding is available to individual councils withdrawing from these councils are not clearly understood. There is strong sentiment that umbrella councils should not be forced in any area. Additional comments:

- OWEB needs to make some hard decisions on what it expects from umbrellas and levels of support that it would actually take to meet those objectives. It should consider a number of options – abolish the concept, continue to support the concept but provide adequate funding, or consider options with different structures or concepts on what the role should actually be.
- If the umbrella concept is to continue it needs some serious rethinking and work.
- Most important thing that we do is work with the people who own the land that we want to improve or restore; we are the facilitators of that community vision. If we aggregate too much, we lose that level of connection with the community.

<u>Should OWEB continue to fund low performing councils?</u>
This is another issue on which there is mixed opinion. One perspective is to discontinue funding if there is no marked improvement after a specified period of time. A different perspective is that such councils are those most in need of continued funding. "One problem with the merit-based system as it currently exists is that councils that struggle the most are penalized by reducing their funding. Cutting funding is not going to help. Need to focus funding on enabling and building rather than cutting."

<u>Should there be incentives for establishing and maintaining effective partnerships?</u>
Partnering is generally felt to be an essential council function and does not necessarily need to be incentivized. More importantly, OWEB can assist in identifying partnership opportunities for councils to pursue. It can also actively encourage other entities to partner with watershed councils. There is general agreement that effective partnerships should be recognized and given weight in council support applications.

Funding Program Improvements
<u>How can OWEB make more effective use of the limited funding that is available? Is there a better model that should be explored?</u>
During the first Listening Session, a multi-pronged funding approach was identified as a model to explore; during subsequent Listening Sessions, this approach was vetted and refined. Ultimately, a model for a multi-element council support funding program emerged:

(1) Guaranteed annual council support funding at a consistent level (base level);
(2) Separate competitive pool of funding available for special initiatives such as community education, events, participation in regional planning efforts, etc.;
(3) Toolbox of technical services available upon request such as auditors, engineers, attorneys, and facilitators; and
(4) Provision of pooled services such as group insurance.

In this approach, every council would receive a base level of support, e.g. $75k, based on some threshold of qualification, rather than the varying amounts distributed under

the merit-based system. While there was general support for OWEB to investigate the feasibility of this model, there were also numerous concerns about it, including:

- Fragmenting of available funds for council support.
- Additional time taken in applying for additional add-on grants to bring council support to what it may have been.
- A variable guarantee is needed to reflect differences among councils, such as in the current merit-based funding.
- Would the guaranteed base have the same basic categories that are now in the council support? If you're going to eliminate some of that then don't touch it. Don't reduce what's currently funded now.
- Would the new pots of funding for elements such as the toolbox reduce the level of funds currently available for community education and outreach, etc.?

Distributing funds and services on a regional basis was also discussed. The sentiment was that before considering a regional approach to funding, OWEB needs to investigate examples – what has and hasn't worked. What can we learn and how can we improve on them? What size is regional?

It was also suggested that existing administrative rules limit the degree to which OWEB can be effective with the limited funds that it has because of the narrow definition of "fiscal administration." If the 10% were to become "general administration", councils could use this to help support organizational capacity, thus increasing the benefit of OWEB funding without increasing the total amount of OWEB funding.

The concept of OWEB addressing restoration priorities through RFPs was brought up at several of the sessions; a moderate level of interest was expressed.

<u>Are there modifications to the existing funding program that would make it more equitable?</u>

There was general support for continuing to distribute funding based on merit rather than on a regional, population, or number of projects basis. OWEB staff was urged to continue to recognize the variability in niches or types of work that councils undertake in their various watersheds, and to avoid funding determinations based on the number of on-the-ground projects undertaken. Much of the discussion focused on making the grant review process more transparent.

<u>Application process: what works/doesn't work?</u>

"We may not love it, but don't change it" is the common sentiment about the council support application. There is universal support for streamlining the application and the review process, but a request that there be no wholesale revisions. "The process will never be perfect but it is generally pretty fair. What doesn't work: the process is far too cumbersome for applicants, reviewers and OWEB. OWEB should establish a guiding philosophy that application processes should be as simple and streamlined as possible." Other key messages:

- Transparency in the review process is needed. OWEB cannot over-communicate in terms of the review process.
- Credit should be provided for multi-year projects.

- The uniqueness of each watershed council needs to be recognized; a council should be judged only on its own merits.
- It is a much easier application now than it has been in the past; the issue is trying to understand what comes out of the review process. What is the real difference between excellent and satisfactory? This categorization of merit is where the angst is. If we're demonstrating that we're doing our jobs, it would be helpful to take the competition out of it.
- The application process consumes the energies of coordinators, leaving them no time to do anything else for a couple of months.
- Too much of application is background information that does not change significantly over time. Maybe the boiler plate background information is needed for educating reviewers, but it gets tiresome for applicant. Ask questions that get to the meat of what reviewers need to know to evaluate if we are using our funds effectively.
- Reviews are fairly subjective; if they were more objective I could learn what it is that I'm being graded on and how.
- It gets easier every year.

Specific suggestions by participants include:

- Re-instate the opportunity to interact with the review team.
- Prior to the grant application due date, make at least a tentative decision about a funding formula.
- Periodically tour completed projects.
- Significantly shorten Section III. Since most applications are submitted every two years, why not ask only for what has changed in Section I. In the Match attachment, why not ask for examples of collaboration and cooperation that do not involve money, but do speak to involvement and dedication.
- Keep the same basic application and review process, but move the category funding amounts much closer together so that the difference between the "needs improvement" and "excellent" is much less; say 20%, rather than being 200% or 300%. This recognizes the difficulty of fairly evaluating so many diverse councils while not eliminating the merit rule consideration.

Priorities

<u>What are the most important actions that OWEB should take to respond to the input from the Listening Sessions?</u>

There was generally a commonality in the priorities identified at the six Listening Sessions and through interviews and on-line surveys. The following were the most frequently mentioned priority actions for OWEB to take:

- Provide funding stability
    - Provide a consistent (and guaranteed) level of annual base funding for council support.
    - Seek increased funding to support council capacity.

    - Undertake and support efforts to garner large-scale broad-based funding from foundations, agencies and other funders.
    - Continue to investigate how to enlarge the slice of the pie that each council receives.
- Develop funding partnerships that would benefit watershed councils as a whole.
    - Identify partnership opportunities for councils to pursue.
    - Consider what kinds of incentives, if any, could be provided to other entities to partner with watershed councils.
    - Build stronger relationships with other funders to encourage them to direct funding towards council projects. Encourage funders to fund capacity.
- Continue to investigate a more equal and even distribution of council support funding.
- Include funding for outreach as part of council support rather than as a separate competitive process.
- Continue to recognize and support the diversity among councils and each council's uniqueness. Measure councils against their specific local needs and plans rather than employing a cookie-cutter approach. Take into account differences among councils: grade them based on differences, base the merit not on the number of projects but the quality of those projects and all the other functions that the council is engaged in.
- Investigate alternative funding approaches.
    - Investigate the best methods to provide for place-based services (those that are best provided at the local level) vs non-place based services (those that could be provided by OWEB, the Network or though another centralized mechanism).
    - Investigate the feasibility of pooled services such as insurance and shared services such as an auditor.
    - Investigate the four-tiered concept (guaranteed pool, special initiative funding, tool box of shared services, and pooled services).
    - Investigate regional funding examples.
- Continue to streamline the application and reporting processes.
- Provide more transparency in the grant application review process.
- Adopt a "Go team" attitude instead of a parent-child relationship.
- Don't give up and don't give in. Don't give up on us and don't give in on helping us to improve.
- Continue to support the Network and promote its services to councils.

Next Steps

Following review by Listening Session participants and OWEB staff of its completeness and accuracy, this report will be revised as needed and submitted to the Board's Council Support Subcommittee. As noted in the report introduction, no significant changes to

watershed council support for the 2011-2013 watershed council support grant cycle are envisioned as a result of the Listening Sessions.

APPENDIX A. COMPILATION OF TARGETED INTERVIEW RESULTS

To help frame the agenda for the Listening Sessions, 20 in-person or telephone interviews were conducted by Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC with members of the Board's Council Support Subcommittee, the agency's Director and senior grant program staff, regional program representatives, selected watershed council coordinators, and the Director of the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils. The following is a compilation of responses; these responses are intentionally unattributed.

1. What would an "enduring, high capacity" watershed council infrastructure look like? How would it be different from today?

- Job security; certainty that their good work will be recognized and rewarded.
- Good salary levels and training provided.
- Regular funding.
- Management of fiscal, administration affairs and managing on-the-ground projects, while looking for alternative funding sources.
- A lot of different answers; probably all correct – account for complexity and differences.
- Healthy board turnover; good partnerships; sharing staff with other WCs; avoiding 1-2 people trying to do 1000 things.
- Highly variable, volatile entities due to geographic areas, personalities, sophistication – need to always be cognoscente of this.

2. What does it mean to be a successful watershed council? What does a successful council accomplish?

- Meeting all the criteria specified in grant applications.
- Reaching out to community.
- Putting projects on ground.
- 3-legged stool – environment, economy and community.
- Education versus large scale restoration projects.
- Recognized in community as resource.
- Conversation turned into projects.
- Respected and has integrity; bridges all the interests
- Highest functioning councils have active presence in their community; create forum to educate / address watershed health issues. Community aware of their presence; active member of their community. Issue of messaging this to councils – that success is more about community involvement than it is miles of restoration.
- Continuity in staff and in board membership; stable funding hat; adhering to priorities of watershed vs. chasing available funding.
- Will vary around the state.
- Community acceptance / used by community. Getting projects accomplished that meet community needs. Well – funded organization.
- Local support and community involvement. Projects completed based on capacity.
- Meet "best practices" for basic governance as non-profit truly inclusive with broad section of participation and outreach.

- Having variety of stakeholders engaged – engagement is more of a measurement than projects; strategic.
- 1) Represents the interests of their basin – equally, fairly; is non-exclusive; interests take active role in council – examples are few examples. 2) Ability to develop / implement projects.
- Number of projects; how engaged members are/how well attended meetings are; partnering; what they are accomplishing.

3. Generally, how do you measure the success of watershed councils? How do we determine success for watershed councils?

- Very difficult, thus a merit system not a good approach – need to rely on RPRs.
- Number of projects on ground; number of working relationships.
- Assessment of how meet benchmarks.
- What are we trying to fund here: underlying board? Are we encouraging the right activities? Are we funding the right things? Legislative budget note specifying merit review. What is success – are we correctly measuring it? Application process provides peer review.
- Partnerships, including those outside of their watershed. More focus on organization (vs. projects) – what's an effective organization (vs. successful project). Never enough time/ funding for regional coordination. How striving to be a better organization; building communities, building capacity.
- Ease of obtaining funding / support.
- Correlate to size and capacity.
- Don't know how to do quantitatively. Measure of improving system's health; operational; community. Avoid getting more and more prescriptive through application and reporting processes.
- Can't measure through grant applications.

4. Should OWEB continue to fund councils that rank low in the council support evaluation process? Should there be consequences for councils that fall in the "Needs improvement" category in the council support evaluation process for more than one biennium in a row? Examples: a) Reduced funding; b) No funding; c) Other

- Put on notice; if no improvement during the coming biennium, and then eliminate funding on case-by-case basis.
- 3 strikes, no funding; 2 attempts to improve is sufficient.
- One of the questions is how long to enable low performers, do we too easily look the other way?
- If can't meet simple bars, shouldn't be funded; cutting funding doesn't do anything; significant staff energy being invested to help them meet standards.
- OWEB works hard to make them a more functioning council but the reduced funding is an impediment to improvement. Heavy reliance on regional representative is needed.
- After 2 biennium of no improvement, time to end investment but should be providing the resources to help such groups succeed.
- Struggling councils need more funding to get on their feet; successful councils can stand on their own; have other funding sources – need to refocus funding.
- Should continue to be funded.

- No, layout expectations for improvements, at end of biennium assess and let go if not improved.

5. **Should OWEB continue to refine the current merit system, or move to a different approach? Examples: a) Flat funding for all councils (not merit based); b) Fund councils that have partnered to accomplish specific strategic priorities, such as model watersheds or special investment partnerships; c) Other.**

- Drop merit system – unfair that WCs have and SWCDs do not.
- Very awkward
- Given limited funding, not really a merit award.
- Such a competitive structure is important; seems to be working well.
- Doesn't feel like even playing field; OWEB needs to better track progress meeting promises, e.g. benchmarks required by Meyer Memorial Trust.
- Somewhat of a caste system - once rated excelled, always rated excellent.
- Question of what's being measured; need to recognize real differences among the councils.
- Rewards those who are better grant writers. OWEB put into overseer role through application process. Creates dependency vs. partnership role.
- Similar to SWCD system with regular reports.
- Have to have some merit base.
- Need to recognize that urban and rural entities are very different.
- Need to recognize "drive" in middle level groups; (a) would encourage more diverse funding, especially for higher end councils forces creativity. May not need to rank councils (merit system); baseline with bonuses; council support should be an element of a council's strategic planning.
- Don't know anything better; works fairly well; huge amount of work; needs streamlining. Question is what are you really evaluating.
- Penalized if have difficulty raising funds. Biased toward extensive/documented process vs. developing/implementing process – focus on process vs. production. Consider additional funding for exceptional councils as an incentive to get even better.
- One option: run as business model – invest in areas that provide greatest return
- Categorization creates demoralization, jealousy, anger when groups fall below. Excellent category.
- Current system actually works as well as any approach.
- Deliverable based – everyone gets with work program as measure. (A) – yes.
- Evaluate on outcomes vs. what they do on a daily basis.
- Working ok; with variability in work being performed, how do rate on merit.
- Hard for smaller councils to advance without more operating support.

6. **Should OWEB consider a moratorium on funding for new councils? If so, why and how should it be affected?**

- Have to have one due to limited funding available; funding for existing WCs is too thin as is – few uncovered areas left.
- Physiologically, no; practically yes; only have so much money; maybe a time-limited moratorium; would also apply to splitting off from umbrellas.

- Apply on a certain scale, e.g. have to be of certain geographic area or addressing certain species of concern; on case-by-case basis.
- Time out until we figure out what we are trying to do, e.g. one biennium moratorium without definition of what trying to do.
- Yes, declining resources; not providing adequate resources to existing councils. Number of SWCDs as a model of a lower number of groups covering the same amount of territory.
- Yes, support WCs next to unrepresented areas.
- Yes, time to merge and combine a number of smaller areas.
- Open to the question.
- Maybe.
- No, but ultimately reduction in number funded, so that a well deserving council can get funded. Goal should be a level of representation – establish variety of criteria that results in representative model – don't need a WC for every stream. Do you need a bookkeeper for every WC / shared services?
- Not a huge issue as few requests recently.
- Continually thinning the soup; have to have some cap. Factors: size limitations. How to incentive vs. cap, e.g. giving umbrellas more funding – not accomplishing goal of de-facto cap.

7. **Should OWEB limit how many councils it funds in order to provide more adequate levels of funding to those we do fund? Since councils are all different with different circumstances, how would it know what figure to target for "adequate funding"?**

- Answer should come from councils themselves; need incentives for small councils to merge with each other.
- Special circumstances will always need to be considered.
- Yes, too many councils.
- Avoid over-funding excellent councils; bring down the top and raise the lower councils.
- Don't really know what trying to do for council support. Haven't done the analysis to know what we'd be getting. No analysis of bottom line funding needs.
- Yes, especially in areas with significant numbers – look for opportunities for consolidation. How much of the watershed is in public ownership should be a factor.
- Yes, in perfect world but reality is we've got what we've got.
- No; amount of funding that could be used for council support is far greater than is being expended. Could improve council activities by infusing more funding into council support.
- Yes, have to cap funding to each council.

8. **What can be done to encourage more stable operational structures or partnerships? Examples: a) OWEB could fund sub-regional technical teams to provide services to all councils in a particular area; b) OWEB could increase funding for assessments and planning work as a way to help council capacity**

- Need to provide decent salaries: a) helpful, particularly in more remote areas (but not in Willamette Valley). b) most areas have completed assessments; need updated assessments.

- Technical support for establishing partnerships.
- OWEB could help educate councils about possibilities; training on how to create and maintain; keep funding the network; reinvigorating partnering networks with agencies, funders, land trusts, etc; issue of affective, real partnerships vs. those that are partnerships name only.
- (A) would dilute available funding.
- Include as part of evaluation process. More investment needed in monitoring, education / outreach. Would help bring up partners. Assistance with networking to build partnerships. Need to re-energize partners about WCs. Being engaged with County Commissioners – key partnerships.
- Strong RPR is critical to identifying partnering opportunities. Mentoring (through network of WC); training support.
- In application, query on how using partnerships to increase effectiveness; appropriate to link partnerships and effectiveness.
- Trainings are extremely valuable.
- Works best where there are clearly defined responsibilities.
- Partnering works pretty well now – everyone knows the need/value of partnering. Help fund staff time for agency participation.

9. Should there be incentives for establishing and maintaining effective partnerships? What type?

- Good partnerships in this region with agencies; relationships among councils in the region improving.
- No, fundamental to what councils do.
- It's already within the ranking process; should carry more weight in application process.
- With incentives would need to monitor / assess such.
- Ability to establish/maintain partnerships should be a performance measure; function of necessity.
- "Secure funds regionally to act locally" partnering with 2 other WCs for landowner recruitment project.
- No, because it's a fundamental element of effectiveness. From practical perspective, already incentives in terms of obtaining funding from other organization.
- Yes, additional funding.

10. What level of funding would it take to incent umbrella councils? What can be done to make umbrella councils more effective?

- Coming together as umbrellas not providing the funding the councils say they need.
- Pretty effective already; where not, largely due to personalities (obstructive) – need effective rules.
- Need to revisit concept of larger geographic areas.
- Positives and negatives of umbrella council; goal should be sharing staff to accomplish more (economies of scale) vs. automatically creating umbrella council. Issues of autonomy and more layers of bureaucracy. Explore other avenues to achieve the goal vs. creating umbrellas; avoid top down approach.

- Not enough additional funding to be much of an incentive. Mechanism to fund more groups when there is lack of enough funding to go around. Some umbrella councils have worked well; others not.
- Efficiencies in scale. OWEB bonus funding doesn't make much difference. Need additional investment in staff capacity and training.
- Currently, incentive to stand alone vs. aggregating services.
- Works well in areas with low population.
- Umbrella councils = model with most promise.
- Regional umbrellas required by OWEB – would need to have bigger role in administering / delivering funds that reduces burdens on watershed councils; technical assistance; OWEB funds to umbrellas. Would be one more layer; questions of composition, how funded, role – would be a lot of resistance.
- Geographic umbrellas (3+ HUCs); some areas have too many councils; combining resources provides efficiencies, makes partner participation easier.

11. What should be the Board's policy on requests to split from umbrella coordinating councils and apply for solo funding support?

- Need to provide more effort to support continued participation in umbrella councils.
- S Coast umbrella is good example.
- Two separate grants = more funding than a single council receives (economic incentives).
- Splitting off reduces funding across board but would benefit the councils splitting off.
- Geographic distance, personalities, existing partnerships, etc. have to be considered. Encourage to stay together unless there's good need to split up.
- Moratorium on additional funding given limited dollars.
- Support existing umbrellas but do not promote new; if unstable, don't stand in way of splitting off.
- Support local control; should not try to force shotgun marriages. Board should allow to occur when there's good rationale. Lack of policy consistency; inequality in resource distribution = umbrella councils are penalized. No real policy option but to allow; would create too much discord.
- Depends.

12. How do/should regional factors affect OWEB's funding of councils? Are there distinct regional needs?

- Yes, areas with ESA issues should receive more funding than others
- Question is really does program recognize and fund district regional needs.
- Try to acknowledge regional factors that make councils productive; account for complexity.
- Councils will be smaller with less rotating memberships in more rural areas; challenge is keeping the same folks engaged over time. Needs are generally universal.
- Community outreach is critical to success in more rural areas; needs to be tailored to the community.

- Need to be recognized. Disadvantage with not being tied to Oregon Plan salmon recovery efforts – projects in those areas can't use federal funds for projects.
- In a qualitative sense.
- Pretty even distribution among regions. Good recognition of regional differences.
- Have not seen them come into play.
- Dramatic difference among regions. Regional review teams critical.

13. How involved are council board members in these issues regarding OWEB funding?

- Varies among councils; generally, board members not involved, need to provide more training to boards.
- Aware but not actively involved; defer to staff.
- Due to nature of periodically meeting, never have fully weighed in; high level of interest; goal to engage the board at a level to "get over the hump".
- Depends on how much coordinators educate / involve.
- Not very much, but know that staff spends too much time on trying to obtain funding.
- Not involved generally beyond chairs; there are exceptions.
- Pretty knowledgeable.
- Several members are very active; all board members are up to speed.
- Minimally.
- Not.
- Heavy reliance on coordinators. Board members should be more involved than they are.
- Good grasp.

14. Should council board members be queried through a questionnaire or other mechanism for their input these issues?

- Can't hurt; good means to find out what they know about OWEB.
- Depends on whether represented in listening sessions.
- Yes. (3)
- Will require significant education.
- No, boards leave such issues to their staff; too many meetings.
- Will have limited knowledge of the details; would need to limit to big picture questions.

15. If OWEB funding disappearing tomorrow, what would be the consequences for watershed councils?

- Fall apart (almost all)
- Work wouldn't get done in some cases or not as fast in others; some projects would be disrupted.
- 2014 issue – no guarantee of funding after this; are we running so hard so fast that we can't lobby for additional lottery funding – what are the tools to strengthening ongoing capacity.
- Would have to scale back greatly – projects would not be as sophisticated.
- A lot of councils would cease to exist or downsize.

- A number of councils would disappear or become shadows of their existing organizations, number of projects would significantly decline; loss of funding to leverage partnerships.
- Restoration projects would continue. Would lose 95% of WCs within 2 years; only excellent councils would continue. Effectiveness would significantly diminish.
- While OWEB is primary funder, would not crash and burn, would find funding elsewhere; priority is to wean from OWEB.
- Provides core support that keeps us strong as an organization, allows us to build partnerships. Care investor that makes us solvent; severe contraction.
- Providing funding for operations is critical. A number would disband; leave many very weak.
- Critical support – majority of operating support. Loss of staff.
- Majority of councils would disappear within several years.
- Question for the listening sessions. No one to step in = loss of coordinators.
- With exception of few funders, no funding available for seeking funding.
- Watershed councils would disappear.

16. What are the greatest barriers to council success and how might OWEB funding help address these barriers?

- Inability to offer decent salary limits ability to attract experienced people – get what you pay for
- Training to both coordinators and boards.
- Streamline state and federal permitting processes.
- OWEB's approach: here's funding, get organized, go do a lot of projects – lack of investment in growing of and care and feeding of councils / infrastructure.
- Funding and training to understand/develop strategic approaches to restoration.
- Being able to have a sense of financial horizon and stability; where tomorrow's grants are going to come from. Organizational stability and predictability.
- The barriers will vary based on geographic, size, sophistication differences.
- Stable funding.

17. What is the single highest priority for change in OWEB's funding program?

- Eliminate distinction between capital (65% of lottery funds) and non-capital.
- Putting a lot of projects on ground without determining whether they are responding to restoration priorities.
- Need more education and outreach funding; never fund adequately.
- Stable funding.
- What to do with chronically low-performing councils – avoid creating an entitlement.
- Addressing issues of fairness and transparency.
- Is the process accomplishing what we want it to.
- Making the application process a tool vs. an obstacle – strategic planning tool.
- More streamlining.
- Resolution of question whether we want to make significant changes to program or not.

- More funding for non-capital activities to enable better assessments before we start projects and monitoring. More funding for operations to allow for outreach, education, partnerships and less time spent on applications. Less turnover of coordinators.
- How can we make grant programs more efficient, e.g. eliminate bottlenecks.
- Competitive-based WC support system
- Teaming up with Meyer Memorial Trust and other funding partners.
- Simplify council support program. Keep competitive for dynamic tension but simplify. Get out of micro-managing council business. How to keep councils at an adequate operating level.
- Selecting projects that address solutions not symptoms.
- More accountable for our dollars.

18. Specific comments on the application process?

- Application process is a necessary evil.
- Trim the application so that less staff time required by all. 2) 10% administrative fee – make it 10% overhead for use by WC as it sees but broaden the potential uses.
- Application – email submittal; requires for 25 copies is onerous.
- Shorter, easier application process that provides the needed information.
- Application process – should not be distributing funding based on skill of grant writer. No apparent bias in application process to excellence in past. Increase funding – establish security in funding.
- In application process, councils knowing how to provide the "right" information. Some are better grant writers than others. Application process is excruciating; enormous amount of time required. At listening session – establish comfortable environment; include an open portion; provide opportunity to identify what's not working and what is.
- Investment vs. return on the application process, especially given the small amount of funding given out – spending too much time to get too little funding. Grant support process changes every cycle, requiring significant recalibration every time – pick something and stick with it. Focus on making it good, recognizing that it will never be perfect; less tinkering.

19. Listening Session expectations?

- Provide opportunity to identify issues for discussion; define what a functional council is; what does it take funding wise to be a functional council; unstructured and structured dialogue.
- How to feed and nurture WCs as project developers, relationship builders; how to support them so they're successful.
- Provide time to reflect about what we need to do.
- Q/A session at end.
- Help frame more effectively than in past.
- How to get candid, full participation at listening session? – challenge: avoiding complaining / woe is me. "We have limiting funding, how can we work together to make the best use of it".

- Listening sessions format – start with general issues, then go to specifics. Time devoted to how to make application process less burdensome – make sure to record sessions. Electronic application form. Avoid making process more burdensome as a result of trying to make it better.
- How to best support capacity-building; improving communication; improving relationships between SWCDs and WCs; building core capacity is the highest priority for OWEB funding. At Listening Sessions, explain the issue of limited amount of funding; what other funding models should we explore.
- At least hour for open forum/advice participants of this opportunity; have fiscal manager present.
- Results of listening sessions: very clear vision of what OWEB trying to achieve and path (including but not limited to) to get there; what defines local capacity, how is it achieved, measured, sustained; here's our role to help you get there. Organization of listening session: lay out hoped for results; focus on how to define the vision and path to get there; not enough funding to go around, how do we build local strength through different model.
- Push watershed councils on what they need to be perspective; how should OWEB choose among requests for money; is there a better model; are there functions better done through another structure – how to better connect to broader scale recovery efforts and how to fund that.
- What do you believe your job is/should be; how much funding do you need to be effective; how do you/we measure that effectiveness; council performance measurement – what should we use; how should OWEB focus and target funding at the basin level; what are the most important things to focus funding toward; what's the most appropriate mix; how much do you need to have a successful council; should funding be distributed on a regular basis; are there some functions that councils are not good at that technical assistant is needed, e.g. land assembly, accounting – SWAT teams; is there a different scale for funding that we should be looking at; distribution of funding questions; are we funding the most needed restoration projects; projects addressing symptoms vs. causes; addressing underlying issues in watersheds.
- Have directors hear concerns; better understanding of challenges; get everyone's perspective; share the results of the interviews.
- Environment that provides comfort in sharing thoughts; issues of peers in room limiting candidness; ensure that groups feel they're been heard; emphasize that getting their feedback.

20. Other comments?

- Never have enough funding, how to make funding go further than it does – will always be limited.
- Grant review process needs to be kept closed to public – internal issue.
- Don't know what we need to add or subtract from the tool kit.
- Everyone wants more funding for operations, less time spent on applications.
- Have created essentially on entitlement program, with assumption that you'll get what you got last grant cycle. Need to evaluate where we've been, where do we want to go, how do we get there.
- Special investment partnerships for model watersheds, provide long-term operational funding. Listening Session expectations: methods to streamline

application process and fiscal reporting (e.g. reimbursement forms); small work groups related among topics.

- OWEB underwriting an entity as an extension of itself – produces mix bag of dynamics. OWEB to be more strategic in advising WCs where restoration needs are the greatest. Ties funding for projects to recovery planning and other strategic direction. Ok to be opportunistic, but need to be strategic first. A lot more education about WCs is needed. Listening session – need to know what will be done with the input; hope that all the watershed councils will participate constructively; provide clear definition of agenda and sideboards to prepare themselves accordingly; provide parking lot for off-agenda issues.
- 1) RFPs model vs. applications based on priorities identified in recovery plans – specific pot of funding, councils submit proposals. How to restructure to request proposals; need to get out of creek a bit to address upland habitat; structure grant offerings based upon defined priorities also tied to other funding sources; how to get the applications that address the most important needs. 2) Separate fund for watershed councils geared to plugging into broader scale planning efforts and to prepare RFPs; would have to build capacity with major councils to do this type of major projects. 3) SWAT experts to help watershed councils design, conduct projects (technical resources).
- Other topics – acquisitions and conservation easements – relationships with land trusts – what is role of watershed councils; data support – access and manipulation of data to assist watershed councils.

APPENDIX B. LISTENING SESSIONS AGENDA

Time	Item
9:00 am	Welcome and Introductions – Tom Byler and Jim Owens ▪ Background and Purpose ▪ Listening Session Approach
9:10	Expectations/Desired Outcomes -- Group Discussion
9:20	What is Success: What does it mean to be a successful watershed council and how can OWEB help you be successful? ▪ What does it take financially to be successful as an organization? ▪ What do you need/desire from OWEB to help you be a success? ▪ Are we accomplishing what we need to with the available funding? How can OWEB funding be better focused to meet those needs?
10:00	Building Local Capacity: What should OWEB do to help build capacity? ▪ Should OWEB limit the number of councils that it funds to order to provide more adequate levels of funding to councils? ▪ Should OWEB continue to provide additional financial support to umbrella councils? If so what amount of financial support would be an incentive to keep umbrella councils together? ▪ Are there functions where contracted services or technical assistance would help build WC capacity? ▪ Should there be incentives for establishing and maintaining effective partnerships?
10:30	Break
10:40	Improving the Funding Program: How can OWEB make more effective use of the limited funding that is available? ▪ Is there a better model that should be explored? Examples: Regional basis, flat funding, RFPs issued by OWEB to address defined restoration priorities, more funding for areas with ESA compliance issues. ▪ Are there modifications to the existing funding program that would make it more equitable? ▪ Should OWEB continue to fund low performing councils?
11:10	Application Process: What works/doesn't work?
11:30	Setting Priorities: How do we best move forward? ▪ What is the single highest priority for change in OWEB's council support funding program?

- What are the 2-3 most important actions that OWEB can take to respond to what we've heard today?

11:50	Break
12:00 pm	Open Conversation (any topic)
12:50	Summary and Next Steps -- Tom Byler/Lauri Aunan
1:00	Adjourn

APPENDIX C. LISTENING SESSIONS PARTICIPANTS

Feb 22 Hillsboro
Wasco Area WSCs
Scappoose Bay WSC
Tualatin River WSC
Johnson Creek WSC
Greater Oregon City WSC
Lower Nehalem/ Necanicum WSC
Lower Columbia WSC
Sandy River Basin WSC
Upper Nehalem WSC
The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
Dave Powers, OWEB Board
Tom Byler
Lauri Aunan
Tom Shafer
Courtney Shaff

February 24 Roseburg
Partnership for the Umpqua Rivers
Smith River WSC
Bear Creek WSC
Elk Creek WSC
Seven Basins WSC
Upper Rogue WSC
Middle Rogue WSC
Illinois Valley WSC
Klamath Watershed Partnership
Tenmile Lakes Basin Partnership
The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
Dan Thorndike, OWEB Board
Miles Brown, OWEB Board
Tom Byler
Lauri Aunan
Mark Grenbemer

February 25 Newport
MidCoast WSC
Alsea WSC
Salmon-Drift Creek WSC
Nestucca Neskowin WSC
The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
Tom Byler
Lauri Aunan
Tom Shafer

March 1 Salem
McKenzie WSC
North Santiam WSC

Siuslaw WSC
Clackamas River
Glenn & Gibson WSC
Long Tom WSC
Luckiamute WSC
Marys River WSC
Molalla River Watch
South Santiam WSC
Tillamook WSC
MidWillamette Watershed Alliance
Coast Fork Willamette WSC
Yamhill Basin Council
North Coast Watersheds
Columbia Slough
The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
Meta Loftsgaarden, OWEB Board
Jose Linares, OWEB Board
Tom Byler
Lauri Aunan
Tom Shafer
Wendy Hudson

March 2 Redmond
Lake County WSC
Sherman County Area WSC
Harney WSC
Bridge Creek/Middle John Day WSCs
Middle Deschutes WSC
Crooked River WSC
The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
Patricia Smith, OWEB Board
Lauri Aunan
Rick Craiger
Sue Greer

March 4 LaGrande
North Fork John Day WSC
Owyhee WSC
Powder Basin WSC
Walla Walla WSC
Umatilla WSC
Grande Ronde Model Watershed
Gilliam-East John Day
Malheur WSC
The Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
Eric Quaempts, OWEB Board
Tom Byler
Lauri Aunan
Karen Leiendecker
Sue Greer

APPENDIX D. LISTENING SESSION REPORTS

LISTENING SESSION #1

Date: February 22, 2010
Location: Hillsboro, Oregon; Clean Water Services
Attendees: Representatives of 9 watershed council representatives, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, OWEB Board member and staff

Tom Byler, OWEB Director, welcomed attendees and advised that this listening session is the first of six in the next two weeks. This process and Watershed Councils are important to OWEB staff; in his experience there is no issue in more important to staff and the Board then the success and effectiveness of the work of OWEB's local partners. What watershed councils do embodies the heart and soul of OWEB's community-based work plus the nuts and bolts of getting things done. Historically, there hasn't been enough funding to support watershed councils, but there is a sincere attempt by OWEB staff, the Board and other interested parties to try to make things better. Over the last year, the OWEB Board went through a strategic plan update. Goal 5 of the strategic plan states: "Support an enduring high capacity local infrastructure for conducting watershed restoration and conservation." OWEB cannot achieve much without local participants in watershed protection and restoration. Staff and Board members want to listen and hear from watershed councils, what is down the road for watershed councils, what are successful councils, what do they look like and what do they accomplish. This is an opportunity to brainstorm.

Jim Owens, Facilitator, advised that the listening sessions will be informal and hopefully everybody will engage. We're not striving for decisions today; we're striving for dialogue. We have organized an agenda around five themes/questions that we want to work through with you plus an open conversation at the end to discuss anything you would like. Nothing is off the table and we are not confined to the agenda items.

Expectations for the Listening Session?

- Appreciate the opportunity to be heard. Beyond today, would like to know that it's an open-ended process. Looking forward to the Board's feedback.
- Want the opportunity today to what hear what other people are saying. How my ideas evolve after hearing from other people as well.
- Would like to hear from various watershed councils where they found the best networking opportunities.
- Hoping that we learn how to streamline council support application process – it's hard to get inspired when writing the application.
- Would like to know what OWEB staff envisions as next steps.
- Improved way that projects are reviewed and treated by review team.
- How to level the playing field.
- A lot to learn about individual challenges – looking forward to big picture ideas. What can this look like 5–10 years from now, beyond grant by grant or project by project basis, but fully functional, sustainable councils – what they look like.
- Appreciative of OWEB staff over time tweaking the application process. Can feel like we're working toward a moving target.
- What is it we want to be when we grow up?

- Premise that watershed councils were founded and volunteers were going to do all this great work. How do we continue to attract people and keep enthusiasm? People are out there – how do you get them to keep coming. There has to be some paid positions.

What does it take to be a successful Watershed Council?

- Having a base level of OWEB support has been essential to survival. Maintaining that base and building upon it is part of our future success. Being able to pool resources regionally. We fall short of being able to come up with base or matching funds for outreach and education. Other pools of resource that we could draw from regionally, e.g. pool of facilitators to bring in on an as-needed basis. Another resource is legal advice – volunteer here or there, but we do struggle with paying for legal advice. Board can't afford it. OWEB couldn't pay for it, but maybe get a pro-bono pool of advisers. Financial adviser pool – for audits, etc.
- Successful councils have credibility in our communities, continuity in knowledge, not a lot of turnover on boards or in staff. Duration of coordinators has greatly increased over the years. Funding roller coasters create problems. Base funding – having enough funding to get our work done as opposed to raise money like a politician and constantly having to do so.
- Most important is that the funding base needs to be more or less stable. How does the watershed council get its name out and be distinguished between the variety of groups out there.
- When topic of merit first came up – Willamette area watershed coordinators had a meeting and discussed what a successful council would look like. Good to look up.

What would be the consequences if OWEB funding disappeared?

- From a council which has significant outside resources, if this goes away I don't think we'll be directly affected, but couldn't survive without a system of councils in Oregon. It was the system that gave them the power.
- It will differ depending on where you are. There's not a whole lot of money out there in certain areas, e.g. Nehalem. Small population base and small industrial support – struggle for funding. Doing fundraising, etc takes a lot of time, takes extra staff support, we've taken classes on how to do this – we know how to do it, we just don't have the resources. Lacking available personnel resources.
- Adequate funding is the basic essential we all have to have. When you go to hire a coordinator we hoped for somebody with appropriate degree, computer literate, be able to do field work, etc. etc., we want the sun, moon and stars but don't have the money to pay such a person appropriately.
- Since July when OWEB allowed us to break away as a solo council, we have a significant increase in funding.
- Funding – element of realism here, I don't think we'll get a bigger share of the pie from the lottery. Is the OWEB portion of the lottery guaranteed?
- It seems to me that if you ignore the funding issue, put it aside for a moment, looking at it from a 1000-foot view, criteria or quality around success seems to be leadership teams – one person can't do it alone. Groups of people who are functioning together in a high capacity mode. All the money without the leadership wouldn't lead to success.
- I think we all know that people come and go but consistency is very helpful and also have the time for our councils to take a half day or day retreat to look at possibilities

and what we want to be, not just what we need to be doing this week, the next 10 days, etc.

- Sustainability of councils and council function -- there is an increasing burden that everything we do is becoming more complicated. Grant writing and projects are becoming more challenging. It gets to the point where it there is no resting place. A pool of money that we didn't have to report everything on would be helpful. I am spending majority of my job figuring out how to maintain organization 6 months down the road, hard to engage with the community. Spend too much time reporting stuff out and takes away from our original purpose.

What would constitute an adequate funding base?

- Being able to fund executive director at a reasonable pay rate, full time fiscal manage, outreach person. 3 full time employees. Would like a full time restoration crew. Each funding source comes with its bureaucracy and stipulations and requirements. You can only do so much in a day. Some streamlining of the OWEB process. More agency support. Revisit the whole process – we've made use of our resources, now what.
- Too much is expected of us. If you're lucky you can partner with a local university, college. Takes away the ability "to do" when you're hunched over a computer.
- Set goals to match reasonable level of funding – have to be realistic. Have to develop strategic partnerships. Look away from increased funding from OWEB because that's not realistic at this time.
- Feasible and a good thing if OWEB would say 'council a' is doing a good job and is meeting requirements, you've crossed this threshold (base) level and we're not going to ask you for this information every two years. We'll give you this base funding every year, if you want more than you must apply for that.
- Flat level of funding if you met basic level of criteria. What would it be? What is the merit piece? Could have to compete for specialized funds. Maybe there is an opportunity for different kind of funding – could complete for larger pools of funding to supplement it. Core of funding that isn't so hard to get and report on it. Operating expenses – shouldn't we have the freedom to use these as each council sees fit.
- Expectation of any granting agency – you're going to have reporting (fiscal) that is required. Saying it's too onerous at this point. How could granting authority come up with process that isn't as time consuming?
- Different funders manage expectations; the conversations can cost more than the small amount of money that we have to report on.
- We spent $200 over a $5 receipt on both ends – when we added up the time.
- Predictability – if we fall into the lower tier, how do we pay certain staff?
- Just wrote first council support grant – found it informational, educational, and helpful. Learned about his own Watershed Council but may find it bothersome if it was not his first. Thinks there is value in the process. Everyone has an interest in how Watershed Councils are run.
- Agree, learned a lot. Washington doesn't have an "OWEB" support or council support grant. Partnerships are very important. Make the most of our money from OWEB by sharing with other folks and them sharing with us.
- Can OWEB identify and help with strategic partnerships? Identify methods to not increase funding but increase Watershed Councils efficiency through partnerships or

other means. OWEB be an advocate against regulatory agencies – in diminishing unnecessary rules.

- Last couple of council support applications have been a good improvement. Old grant manager had an entire page for OWEB grants when the whole doc was 7 pages for 23 grant agencies. Freedom and flexibility even with insufficient funding with less reporting to free up time to do actual work.

Are we using the available funding correctly?

- Yes, we've followed priorities that have been set, from community, advisors and our own assessment we have done these things. But there are bigger things that need to be done in the community.
- It seems there are different camps Some feel that being tied to SWCD with 10% charge is a drain and others feel that a tie to SWCD and using their fiscal agent saves them. Some councils are operating grant to grant. Whole thing seems to incentivize defragmentation of the entities.
- Should OWEB limit the number of councils? We've had time to analyze what's been accomplished. Until you do your assessment and evaluate what's been accomplished statewide – then you can't judge this. Could be a review by OWEB – regions that have accomplished X. This would be highly valuable, could take to voters and say look what we've be able to accomplish.
- Smaller council approached us to join our group, but they ultimately decided that the priority of their issues could be controlled by themselves rather than joining with a larger council. They decided to go it alone.
- What is OWEB trying to accomplish with council support funding? Trying to get more of the citizens of Oregon aware of their local watersheds and how they are affected and what they can do overtime to improve them. Having councils in as many locations as possible to do this outreach and education is highly important. Grassroots kind of stuff – I live here, I'm invested in this place, want it to be different for my kids etc – maybe you can consolidate in some ways but let's not lose this important piece.
- How does OWEB view the long-term/bigger picture for watershed councils? And what do we become when we grow up? Had the first flush of energy with folks being involved, having hard time attaining board members. People are either scared of or not excited about. What's our relationship with OWEB? Are we just grantees or part of a bigger conversation?
- Thought my mission was to implement the Oregon Plan for fish restoration and watersheds.
- In my watershed, easy to know that some of our projects are successful but no idea whether salmon restoration is working. Difficult to tie results with individual projects – no idea if they are worth the investment. We do not have the means to collect the data.
- Councils were set up as ground up / grassroots organizations that are now intersecting with complicated big agency stuff – salmon recovery planning, etc. What is the expectation of the councils now? Are councils the best to do the salmon recovery data collection – is it success? Are they the best agency to do the education? What are your expectations for watershed councils?
- Salmon recovery is not the only important thing about watersheds.

What should be the focus of watershed councils -- outreach and education, projects or implementing statewide initiatives or is it all?

- In my council, goal is to implement the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. In doing this we try to engage the community and raise awareness.
- Watershed Council board members are there for different reasons – i.e. fish, riparian zones, bike / pedestrian.
- Unless you have some overarching goal that your projects are trying to achieve, just doing projects for projects sake doesn't make sense. There needs to be something that we all agree on and are striving for.
- Significant conversation was around scalable efficiencies. There should be organization representation at the slough or creek level. Place-based stewardship with increasingly efficient models. Is there a way to have place-based local capacity without having to replicate organization pieces necessary to do that? Does it need to be on same micro-scale? Seems unrealistic.
- We struggle with how much duplication you have, how many people do you share where another organization is providing funding for technical staff person. Can you share resources across councils to increase capacity in areas where you wouldn't be able to stay at your own goal line? How do you maintain place-based community outreach and justify your cost and running your organization and what it would require? How do you determine the critical mass of groups without having funding restrictions? Do you have more who are limping along or do you cut funding to those who are not functioning at high capacity and direct funding to the more efficient Watershed Councils? Don't have the answer, but I think that's the question we need to look at.
- If you have 0.5 million people in a watershed in a highly developed area vs. John Day where there are superior fish resources, does it make sense for you to be doing research monitoring or outreach in this highly developed area. How to effectively fund or set up a scale for funding?
- Give us credit for what we have chosen to do vs. what we haven't done because it might not make sense to do outreach in particular areas or projects in certain areas. We're not all able to do the same things.
- Last year, the president of League of Oregon Cities traveled around Oregon and talked with people about their relationship with their state. Oregon is a very large geographically diverse state. What fits in Portland might not fit in Klamath Falls, John Day, etc. Economic factor about fish runs is very critical in our community and watershed.
- I really like concept if you were to give people a chance to say – what do you do best, how do you do it, show it, what are your efficiencies. Say what we do and report on it and have flexible funding on this. We focus on projects because that is where we can get the money. Not trying to be everything to all people. For those larger level issues, there should be special interest funding that we could apply for. It gets tiring to be everything to all people.
- From a systems standpoint, we need a strategy for determining scalable inefficiencies. What functions are place-based and what kind of functions are not?
- There are some things like audits that do not need to be done by someone in the community. You could have someone do audits for you that is not on your site.
- Strategic partnerships help with this. There are maybe more opportunities out there that we are aware of.

- The thing I'm good at is outreach, so give me funding for that. Self-evaluation process – how do you have limited pot of funds disseminated amongst 60 odd groups when they self-evaluate?
- Provide base funding so that we're not squirming, but anything above and beyond we still have to apply for. Are they doing what they say they're doing? Are they doing reasonable projects for what they say they're good at? We complete for merit funding for special types of projects. If we knew that we had guaranteed base funding it would make life a lot easier. Pools are going to be limited and are never going to meet all needs, and that is where strategic partnerships come into play.
- Purely self-identifying what you're good at – OWEB would have to decide if it makes sense. Does it meet some larger priority?
- OWEB was going to set regional priorities; this would be helpful to organize our regional goals. Identify common priorities and get the incentive of OWEB restoration priorities.
- We all try to spread ourselves out over as many areas as we can. It would be better if we could focus on what we're good at. It's amazing that we are in competition on all fronts, really nice until council support comes around. We're going to provide you with a staff person for 2 years, you have to compete for it and decide how best to share this person.

What should the policy be on umbrella councils?

- We received incentive funding but we've been able to get more funding for our base support as individual councils. Undermined us working together. We're not meeting as a joint group anymore. When we shared a grant, there was just no way there was enough money to support two coordinators. I suppose it could be effective if councils are small enough and geographically close enough.
- OWEB needs to play the role of arbitrator. Every council is going to advocate for as much funding as it can. We don't have that regional perspective. Stand alone so that we can get more money and have our projects be the highest priority.
- What would you look at if you were the arbitrator? Size and geographic distance?
- Population served, geographic proximity, alignment of priorities.
- It doesn't make sense to me. I don't know why I'm not considered an umbrella when I serve over 4 councils. Some councils get extra benefit for serving more watersheds. Currently it's a little "weird."
- Is it an economic disincentive to be two combined councils – you bring in more money as separate organizations.

Should the number of councils that OWEB funds be limited?

- We didn't feel like we had enough money to give base level of support. In some cases a larger boundary does make sense. Would it be easy to work with another watershed that doesn't have the same philosophy?
- It is hard to convince people that they should get together to talk 4 times per year to get more money for the coordinator – these board members are volunteers and don't necessary care what's going on in another watershed.
- Funders out there that will only fund if there is collaboration.
- Local stakeholder involvement and knowledge – this thing doesn't work. Outreach, monitoring, project maintenance, contract oversight, education – place-based. Non place-based – payroll, bookkeeping, project management, accounting etc. Those could

be taken off the burden of the individual. What can be centralized that can increase the ability to work locally.

- Other funders give organizations a certain number of years funding, then say they become self-sufficient and they cut off the funding. OWEB thought about this and received negative feedback. At some point we will need to get to the point where under-functioning councils must be cut off.
- Criteria to become a watershed council? Have you looked at this?

Are there specific place-based activities (those that need to take place in the watershed) versus those that are more aggregate functions (financial, audit, bookkeeping, etc) that OWEB should fund?

- Web-site design, GIS mapping – these would be awesome to share.
- Also how do you determine what those aggregate things are so that it's not arbitrary?
- Could be something different depending on where you are in the state.
- Are these designations coming from you or defined by OWEB?
- Could be designated regionally.

What are you thoughts on the application process? What's working/not working?

- It's better than it was. It does help us go back and reflect. Every 6 months we review and look at "we said we were going to do x, y & z – how are we doing."
- Basically comfortable with the OWEB application at this point, used it to complete the council support application.
- Hearing from councils that OWEB is trying to identify and incentivize councils to act in a certain way, governance / operational way. But the getting to that on the part of councils through application seems reiterative. Layout big broad picture of benchmarks, standards or principles and let us figure out how to achieve those. Have a conversation around the same intentions but the disconnect is how to get there – becomes complicated. Heard people say don't change it because we don't want it to get worse.
- Much easier application than it has been in the past. Issue is trying to understand what comes out of the review process and the difference between excellent and satisfactory. Categorization of the merit – this is where the angst is. Could we take it out? If we're demonstrating that we're doing our jobs, it would be helpful to take the competition out of it. A lot of really good councils, there are councils that need help and some that are not functioning. It adds unnecessary burden to everybody to make the point systems. What forces you to do the merit system?
- Much better than it used to be. There is still an awful lot of time on paperwork and repetitive stuff.
- When you have a finite pot of money, how can you not build merit into the evaluation?
- You can have people meet requirements without having to compete in this way.
- You would have to demonstrate some sort of outcome to get the base funding. There does have to be some sort of competition otherwise people won't give much effort to it.

What are the most important actions that OWEB can take as a result of this conversation?

- When board and councils look at regional ideas, we need to look at what examples out there – what has and hasn't worked. What can we learn and how can we improve on them? What size is regional?
- Regional examples and how well they work.

- Investigate opportunities for creative funding and also simpler process.
- Supporting efforts to garner large scale broad-based funding. Try to enlarge the slice of the pie.
- Ways for councils to show what they're good at – not trying to be good at everything. Shouldn't be merit based for projects if we're not a project based council.

OPEN CONVERSATION
(Watershed council representative comments/questions in italics; OWEB staff responses in regular text)

We expect the summary report of the listening sessions will be ready by the June Board meeting. It's not realistic to make a dramatic overhaul of the council support process or funding approach for the next funding cycle. We will develop recommendations and next steps. There are some things that the Board will have to tackle in June. Two items that the Board has specifically raised – what should OWEB's policy be regarding funding for new councils for 2011/2013, and should we change our policy regarding requests for "solo funding" by councils that have been part of an umbrella council? OWEB's rules are very specific and detailed regarding the merit evaluation of applications. If we were not going to do a merit based application it would be a longer process to change our rules.

What kind of consensus is there around councils as an automatic funding entity through which OWEB will do work?

Councils are strongly engrained in who we are by statue, rule and tradition. Board members see councils as an important component of what we do – 1/3 of our grants go to watershed councils. Board members greatly appreciate what watershed councils do, especially in making the Oregon Plan work. Figuring out if there are ways to help councils diversify funding and grow the funding pie outside of OWEB funding is very important.

As I look towards councils and districts, are there any larger computations on how Oregon is going to get work done and fund agencies – is there a conversation on the state level in any way – looking proactively towards natural resource funding? Does it exist at all?

It's a tough arena right now -- every agency is working hard to develop game plans, budgets, but it's just a tough budget environment right now. This is a time of uncertainty but folks are working on it. There is a Governor's election this fall – there will be a changing of the guard. Potential shifting of priorities depending on who is elected.

Is there any opportunity for OWEB to deregulate things we have to deal with? Permitting, different agency requirements, etc.

OWEB can continue to raise this issue with the regulatory agencies. We've been involved in the past to some degree, e.g. 4D Rule. Restoration projects shouldn't have to jump through as many hoops as a proposed mini-mall or strip mall.

Another thought – threshold project idea with different twist – identifying groups/ partnerships where you'll expense specific funds for a specific process. We'll invest a block grant of fund without folks having to go through grant cycle.

From a legal standpoint, several tools to distribute funds. We could explore the possibility of an RFP, here's what we want, it would be a competitive process and folks could apply, and we could make decision on who to contract with. We also have the special investment partnership grant-based model where the Board sets up front goals that seek specific outcomes in certain areas for certain types of projects.

As groups diversify how do you make it fair? Some of us are suffering in comparison; we do not have all the resources as others. How can you be an excellent council when you're competing with councils that have endless resources? Pushing for leveling the playing field a bit – understand that it has to be merit-based to some extent. It would just be nice to know that you could rely on a certain level of funding.

Let's assume that in the future there is still a legal difference between capital vs. non-capital resources. Also assume that council support funding approved by the legislature in OWEB's budget is still $5 million. Assume we have our traditional grant types. How would you react if we expended less money on monitoring, education, etc. grants and crafted regional RFPs that targeted funding for technical assistance positions or fiscal positions shared amongst the councils? What would be more useful for you?

First reaction – RFP may not be the way to do, may create a scramble. It would need to be a regional collaborative process that results in a consensus plan for which there is a pot of funds. The goals are the same but there may be unintended results of the process. OWEB has the resources, the design needs to come from the community.

Part of the criteria could be to require partnerships. Partly why umbrella councils haven't worked very well is because there haven't been adequate financial incentives. Real challenge is that there is just not enough money on the non-capital front.

LISTENING SESSION #2

Date: February 24, 2010
Location: Roseburg, Oregon; David Douglas County Library
Attendees: Representatives of 10 watershed council representatives, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, two OWEB Board members and staff

Tom Byler, OWEB Director, provided opening comments similar to those reported above for the Hillsboro session.

Expectations for the Listening Session?

- More money.
- Streamlining process – making it easy to understand and easy for people who don't have extensive experience as coordinator. High turnover.
- That Courtney Shaft knows that I'm here.
- Good understanding of the diversity of the various councils. More cows in our watershed than people, things that we do very different from what an urban council

would be doing. Hard to get volunteers in our area, but the things we are doing don't really require volunteers. Not putting everyone in the same box.

- Document produced that clearly delineates the process and perhaps also creates a venue for interaction with people that make the decisions.
- Some of the confusions that we have are related to interpreting OWEB processes and deadlines. Can we pay for X with Y. Interpretations from OWEB are not consistent. Not always clear what goes and what doesn't and who you talk to and what is the process for clearing it up.
- Interested in capital capacity, not only funding, but technical support and all those things that make a council viable and successful. Is there something OWEB can do to assist us to maintain or increase capacity.
- Cannot separate council support and on the ground restoration projects. On the ground money is absolute to success.
- Reality is that there is never enough money. OWEB is bouncing down an alley on one side trying to spread out coverage and on the other side they aren't paying enough to get quality people and effectiveness. Not quite sure how these decisions are being made. Guidance about what the future holds would be excellent.
- Hoping for a good discussion to give input so that there can really be a thoughtful look about how council support funding is handled to create a stronger system. Reward different kinds of successes that different councils have. Looking at the box a little differently – reshaping application process and funding criteria could make a difference in creating stronger councils and more opportunities for other kinds of support.
- Recently OWEB went through process wanting verification of project management funds. When you are having somebody do project management that covers not just their salary and benefits but their portion of utilities and computers. OWEB is getting narrowly focused here. Most councils are small businesses – have to cover expenses, be profitable or they lose money. Problem with this new tactic – SWCDs are supported by Department of Agriculture but also use OWEB funds. If we can look at each project as having to be something that pays for itself then capacity issue becomes for this project we have to be able to pay for this person. OWEB support for one full time employee to manage the process and projects would help.
- Extremely different councils. OWEB portion covers half the coordinator's salary, utilities and overhead costs. Would be better to just support one full time person across the board.
- Why can't OWEB give support like they used to – encompass capacity and restoration rather than just the council support.

What does it mean to be a successful Watershed Council?

- A group that is defined and works within its own niche.
- There are as many answers to this question as there are watershed councils. Every watershed council is different. What works in one watershed council is not necessarily going to work in another. Priorities vary, land ownership varies. We need flexibility to accommodate all those differences.
- Watershed council mission statement – how it is measured by the goal, where have we succeeded or failed in relation to that mission statement. Implementation of mission statement – whether you are achieving it or not.
- Council support application – scoring is not fair to all watershed councils.

- Council support grants were no longer uniform (2003) but they became accomplishment/merit driven. There have been some obvious benefits but this is where we get into the issues of what is successful and because you have to set level of success for the merit based applications, but those councils that don't conform to the particular requirements are hurting because of this but that doesn't mean they are successful.
- We have to have merit based – it's a grant world.

How do you know when you're successful in your community?

- Opening on your board – how quickly you can fill that position.
- How council is perceived by non-council (contractors or anyone who would have direct contact with – landowners, urban dwellers etc).
- Awareness of the council in the watershed, no matter how much restoration or work is done.
- OWEB has some kind of mission statement too that is articulated and controls how they feel about where they are going to put their money and measure effectiveness. We should be aware of this statement and how we mesh with it. We don't just need to look at our own organization and ask if we're effective.
- Try to get along with very disparate groups (farmers, ranchers, tribes), responsive to those people, responsive to OWEB, responsive to community at large. OWEB funds are something that we deserve – it's our responsibility to use these public funds wisely and with the most benefit.
- You put together something you want to achieve and you do it. Sign of success is when you're asked to repeat. Achieved goal and become known.
- We basically have a strategic plan that we track and measure our successes on. Restoring streams for fish and people. Watershed Council is the entity that is part of the Oregon Plan to restore Salmon and Steelhead. We focus on stream restoration work. We have a lot of willing landowners; just don't have the resources to address all the demand for services.
- Successful audit report.

What are your standards for success and how can OWEB help you be successful?

- It keeps coming back to money. We need to be successful in helping OWEB get more money. Reinvent the wheel. We need to be competitive in the economy that we are in. If we're getting funded then that's successful.
- Are we getting more fish in the streams? What are we getting for the dollars? How do you go to people and ask them for money without producing something.
- High turnover for coordinators – why is that happening?
- We went through extensive strategic plan geared for success – our idea is to be thoroughly integrated in the community, common household name, reliable non-regulatory citizen based organization that is actively pursuing active fisheries, salmon recovery and water quality. If there was a mechanism created to give people a context to get stuff done, managing expectations and doing it successfully so that we're not losing landowner support. General perceptive that landowners are the bottleneck and he doesn't see it that way. We need tools to help people properly adjust to their expectations – we could have a publication or overall plan that would allow people to say – ok here's where I fit into it. A big part of our plan and the reason we want to be

more involved is also for the purpose of building capacity. We want our community to support it along with OWEB.

- If OWEB had a way to measure that pent up demand it would help with the legislature.
- Capacity – you get to the ceiling and you can't go any further because there is no additional funding. Not sure how OWEB can facilitate us getting through that ceiling.
- We are all inter-connected. Failure of a council in one area impacts us all. OWEB can do a better job of picking out the bad apples and get rid of them or do something about them before the word spreads. When one of us is perceived as failing (not good public servants and completely our missions) then we all are impacted.
- One thing that strengthens us is that there are councils all over the state. Councils going under worries me. Talking about figuring out a way that this program can be tweaked so that there are as many successful councils as possible, bad apples go away and something there to create another watershed council in their place. Support to allow residents to reform and progress and not spend several years with low or no funding. For a council with low capacity but isn't a bad apple, there needs to be support to help them increase capacity – some sort of safety net to help them build and move forward because if they're successful we're all successful.
- Fund all councils and districts period.

What is an adequate level of funding?

- Depends on the council.
- Shouldn't be flat level base.
- Solid piece of pie of council support would probably reduce turnover, but would turn us into state agencies.
- One problem with merit based system as it stands is councils that are struggling the most to be successful are penalized. Cutting funding is not going to help – creates double whammy.
- Hybrid things here – rather than cut funding, allocate funding in different ways. Fund successful watershed councils and provide feedback for where they need improvement. Struggling watershed council -- focus funding towards enabling and building rather than cutting.
- Maybe there are too many watershed councils?
- Don't fund all the way; there is a certain level that enables. Bigger piece of the pie towards council support, a lot of what we've been hammering around today has been looked at. OWEB has ways of dealing with. Merit-based system has merit to it but beyond that there is a point in time where I want all you guys to have your funding but I want to get my projects done too. Other sources of funding for restoration projects. OWEB could do better liaison work on that – more dollars for council support which is hard to obtain through alternate funding sources.

Should we limit the number of councils receiving funding?

- Yes, I think we need to at some point or we have to grow funding before we grow the number of councils. We need a bigger piece of the pie toward council support and capacity. Lobby to get more dollars.
- Making what you've got work smarter and effectively.
- OWEB has priorities too and that's where the dollars have to go to meet these priorities. I have a hard time dumping councils that are struggling. We have to rely on the

business model – where the money is coming from and how to run with the amount of money you have. Any council should be capable of doing that. Maybe it's a training issue.

- There is council support and then there is capacity building. Maybe those should be two separate pots of money. Would have to demonstrate need and compete for the capacity piece and council support be guaranteed. Merit based with the capacity piece.

Are we accomplishing what we need to with the funding that we have?

- I'm seeing more fish.
- Is there some other model or something else that might work better? Things that need to be corrected?
- Topics are the same in these meetings in the last 12.5 years – only the faces change. Now the difference is the restoration funding is so tight.

Thoughts about a concept of a guaranteed pool of money matched with special initiative funding and a toolbox of shared services, e.g. auditing or other technical needs?

- This touches on what I mentioned earlier with capacity = special initiative funding. This would work ok, guaranteed pool money to get us started and then special initiative funding.
- Nexus to quantify the issues so that they are not repeated. Put them down on paper and make them available for people – help us find a solution.
- This sounds really good as long as I don't have to go through a grant process that changes every spring or fall. In principle I like this.
- Maybe one of the reasons it's the same conversation at the table is because of coordinator turnover. In the time that the Network has been conducting new coordinator training, we have seen the numbers of new coordinators to train decrease.

If there were a pool of shared technical services, what kinds of services should be provided?

- Relationship therapists – councils are really about relationships i.e. with community, board, OWEB, funding agencies, etc.
- Facilitators.
- Self-evaluation assistance. Professional facilitator.
- Engineering.
- Equip Watershed Councils with potential sources of funding outside of OWEB. Think in watershed scale when issues we are addressing are on a much larger scale – other entities out there that are interested in the same big picture and may be willing to fund.
- Original thought was to have OWEB support councils for first 3 years then would be self reliant – never worked. Envy Watershed Councils that have municipalities, water boards, etc as we are so sparsely populated and have no such sources of funding.
- Technical assistance is a big problem, agencies have been somewhat supportive in providing technical assistance, but they don't come up to our area, e.g. project design.
- DEQ has a monitoring equipment sharing program/services.
- Project management.
- Funded peer support – Watershed Council act as peer mentor to lower functioning Watershed Councils.

What can OWEB do to help you build effective partnerships?

- One person working to gain foundation funding rather than 58 different watershed councils, kind of like umbrella group and then disperse between the Watershed Councils.
- Pursue stimulus funding.
- Over-worked and under-paid agency employees – hard to get their time.
- Noticed that when approaching projects and wanting to get funding – there is always match required – can't we use OWEB funding as a match for these other alternative funding sources that require match funding.
- Most other funders don't require you to have funding in hand but you have to have it by the end of the contract.
- We have very good relationship with ODFW but if you want something more complicated than logs in the stream you have to go somewhere else.
- Partnership points in the application with same level of points.
- Letters of support in the application, also a way of showing success.
- More money for effective partnerships.
- Increasing the match requirement for council support.

Application process – what's working and what isn't?

- Stop changing it every time. The format is fantastic – work plan, bulleted, tables etc. I'm happy with the Watershed Council Support application – let's just quit changing.
- I think it is fine – stick with it as it is.
- There is a lot of redundant information.
- There is a lot of cut and paste.
- I like it – no problem with it.
- Would like to see OWEB go to every council meeting through the process. There are limitations to the applications, it doesn't describe us. During the process come in and evaluate the councils to see what's going on. Put it in combination with the applications.
- Response/critique by our Board was very useful. Our Board took it to heart and we are working on our quoted weaknesses. Our Board wasn't interested in the application but what the grade we received was. We then discussed our weaknesses with them and are addressing them. I was just starting so it let me know where OWEB was coming from.
- Basically you're filling out an application of what you have done over the last two years, you get a grade. If you get a bad grade then you pay for it for the next two years. You can use this to improve. Priorities of the application process may not fit your Watershed Council exactly though, but if they are this is a good thing to use to improve, but if your priorities or needs are different then it varies.
- We could include capital and restoration costs. Can we utilize capital expenses to cover costs of project manager or other things like we used to.

Thoughts about umbrella councils?

- Think they are more efficient than not.
- Get a few more points on your application.
- Funding is not that much more. Is more efficient because with the little bit extra funding we are getting instead of covering one watershed we are covering seven.

What are the highest priority messages for the OWEB Board?

- Get match funding through foundations or stimulus funding to support capital capacity.
- Like the idea of sharing an auditor.
- In some way having interface with OWEB where the dialogue continues after these rounds of meetings will be very beneficial.
- Also important where we get things done on the ground – councils go through process when they form. Scramble to get projects done, no real system to it then it evolves to systematic council. Not entirely how much you get done on the land – but where you get it done. Value of doing these projects is only half of what the fish are getting out of it – but the other side of it is when I walk around with the landowner my goal is to get the landowners involved in their streams and to change the land use practices to get us to where we are.
- Would be worthwhile to have one on one dialogue with the application review team. Would like to be able to answer questions first hand and gives opportunity to let reviewers better understand the individual watersheds and where they fit in this whole process.

Should the concept of a guaranteed funding pool with special initiative funding be further investigated?

- Like this model with the technical assistance box because it covers the extra expenses by having a higher capacity.
- Model doesn't do much for me – just takes same amount of insufficient money and slices it up differently – does like the shared services.
- Likes it with further investigation – can see some negatives, but likes it in general.
- See myself working harder to get the same amount of funding. Like the guaranteed pot, but have some merit base to it. Think we need to keep going with this thing.

OPEN CONVERSATION

(Watershed council representative comments/questions in italics; OWEB staff responses in regular text)

What if you hear from the others that they like this three-part funding concept – will you be able to present to it to the Board in June?

For the next council support funding cycle, we are not planning significant changes. In June, the Board will consider its policy around funding for new councils and requests for "solo funding" by councils that have been part of an umbrella council.

We will be working on next steps and recommendations from the listening sessions. We have formed a work group with councils and council support application reviewers, with the goal to simplify the application where we can – for example, perhaps pull things out that are redundant or that we have on file. We'll keep you posted. Those meetings start at the end of March and beyond and we'll take information learned in these sessions to that work group.

On the question of funding new councils, can you statutorily say no to more councils?

We don't control whether they are formed or not, but the Board can decide whether to provide funding to new councils.

Uncomplicate the umbrella council process.

The practical reality is there is no financial incentive to do an umbrella council and actual incentive is to split up if splitting results in more OWEB funding. Conceptually, the Board is interested in aggregating services to make more efficient. Model that we've created hasn't worked in a number of cases.

I have some difficulty swallowing all the money being spent by OWEB on consultants. Already work that the watershed councils are doing, hired consultants come in and expect us to do their work. I would hope that when you're looking at projects you're looking at supporting the watershed councils. A lot of the work being done by the consultants could be done by the watershed councils.

Interesting and fair point. In some areas where we deal with a contractors, it's because the project has a statewide scope. Also we have been hearing that we already ask you to do so much that we don't dare ask you to do more without additional resources.

Each agency has its own culture and own set of priorities and issues that they address. We felt like if we had more self-determination in the process it would more effectively address our concerns. (Referring to umbrella councils)

There are umbrellas that work. We at OWEB haven't done a good job creating incentives to make it work. We've given people the impression that if you carve out your own council you'll get more funding. We are interested in finding ways to create efficiencies whether that be umbrellas or this model you were talking about today. Willing to work on growing the pie but that will be hard.

Do you agree that monitoring of watershed councils is important? What about a program for all watershed councils to have a monitoring component?

Monitoring is important. What kind of monitoring is also an important question. One thing at OWEB that we are working on – we do a good job of measuring outputs, that's important too, but where we really want to go is to be able to talk about outcomes – return on investment. Interested in ways to invest dollars to understand what is happening on a larger landscape scale rather than just individual projects, so that we can provide meaningful information for long term goals.

What happens with all this monitoring? Several watershed councils have years of monitoring and they do nothing with it because they don't have the resources.

Everyone will say monitoring is important. But you end up with all these different silos with different monitoring techniques, limited resources, etc. Tougher and tougher budget cycles will diminish monitoring funds. We need to get better at it with these limited funds.

It would be nice if OWEB said one of the criteria for funding our projects is whether you are going to do validation monitoring. It seems to me that OWEB should have to answer to the legislature

if the funding is being used to improve the salmon and steelhead. Please just come up with some standards – what you want monitored, what scale you want it on – some protocol.

We are definitely thinking about this a lot.

We get funds for salary and benefits. Want to discuss healthcare – one big consideration for retention of employees. Is there anything you could do to contact companies that provide healthcare and if they would provide a healthcare at a reduced amount and get tax benefit for the difference because we are non-profits. Have a group policy for Watershed Councils?

The Network is looking into health care group coverage.

Years ago, there was an OWEB business person to help build relationships between business and watershed councils.

A long-term goal is to build communication tools that can reach people to increase awareness and involvement. We'd like to provide tools for councils to reach out to sectors in the community that haven't typically been involved – there may be some role they can play to contribute resources; much like working with private foundations. This is in the building block stage right now.

We like the application as it is now. How does that work for you?

Our application reviewers volunteer their time and it's a hugely intensive process for them to read and review the applications. We are trying to figure out things that they don't need to look at. We want to streamline for the reviewers too. The work group will be looking at the applicastion and asking where's the value and what's not needed?

Additional comments
OWRI and OGMS are incredible
OWEB should keep providing scholarship funds for council training.

LISTENING SESSION #3

Date: February 25, 2010
Location: Newport, Oregon; Guin Library
Attendees: Representatives of 4 watershed council representatives, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, OWEB staff

Tom Byler, OWEB Director, provided opening comments similar to those reported above for the Hillsboro session.

Expectations for the Listening Session?

- Have to have money – hard to do anything without it.
- Learning about the issues of the councils in this area.
- Big picture ideas that get us beyond individual councils and watersheds but to the systemic and sustainable stuff that can make this thing work for a long time.

- Hope from this process is that OWEB will be motivated to move to coming up with definitive answers to some of the nagging questions.
- Other funding sources – partnership funding sources.
- Like to see some a way for local councils to get support from OWEB – if you want local infrastructure you have to support them.
- Understanding OWEBs non-watershed council obligations and where we fit into OWEBs scheme.
- Our council gets good financial support for our projects and indirect support for capacity building, would like to see how OWEB is supporting our council rather than just capacity building. Support for sustenance.
- Desired outcomes would be to have OWEB make tough decisions unless we can increase the amount of the overall pie, OWEB increase pie by partnering with foundations or similar. Councils that are not functioning need to have funding cut back, not supported just because to free up funding for functioning councils.
- Clear and logical method of deciding support.
- Like to see more accountability in the whole process – migration from GWEB to OWEB and how it morphed.
- Would be nice for OWEB to know and articulate and practice to the extent that it is truly involved in council capacity and high performance as opposed to or in combination with being a project funder. Local capacity mechanism in a comprehensive way as opposed to just a project funded.
- When I hear references as "within the rules" – to what extent can the framework be written to challenge/change the rules.

What does a successful council look like?

- We see success as getting things done, getting projects implemented, getting education programs implemented, making a difference and having the capacity to get all the steps done necessary to achieve these things. We have a variety of ad hoc measures – how many, how big, how many students for how much time were involved in education plan.
- Do actions support planning goals – basin plans, strategic plans? Are our accomplishments in line with our plans?
- Success comes out of tech teams and how they work together with action plans.
- Whether the end goals are being met – community support, salmon return, water quality.
- Viable organization in terms of board, staff, contractors etc.
- Good working partnerships with local agencies, land owners and organizations within your basin.
- Using basic goals as reference.
- People's willingness in the community to be involved with your ideas, approaches, projects – willingness to participate.
- It would seem that representation on boards and make up of organization – how truly representative that is in terms of form and function.
- Creative tension with local activity and larger scale priorities – need to be opportunistic at local level but to some extent needs to be consistent with larger goals (Oregon Plan etc).

- Powerful to see the extent to which leadership teams either make or break the ability of the organization to work well over time. Is there a leadership structure in place that is sustainable and strong?
- When you look at capacity – does one person cause the success of the organization and does the success rely on that person being there.
- You can't judge a fully staffed council for 15 years against a council who has never received capacity funding and you're still here 12 years.
- Remove obstacles that may have created an unsuccessful organization.
- If we're talking about a successful watershed council, it has to go back to the goals for OWEB and their goal for funding. I tend to be part of the "on the ground" world which takes all the capacity stuff, but unless we are doing restoration projects that make a difference, then what's point.
- Success of a watershed council should be judged on whether it is making difference on the ground for high priority species and educating people on the way. Those councils that have received funding and don't have successful projects are not acceptable. Success on the ground.
- Conversation is around survival of watershed councils on a day-to-day basis. Successful system would be conversation at every level is outcome based. This is a reflection on the state of the system on the individuals involved. Focus forward with implementation.

How can OWEB help watershed councils be successful?

- The number of projects you have going will dictate how much administrative money you will need. Every grant should set aside funding for administrative needs.
- Fixed by outside party – written in the rules. Economies of scale – smaller projects larger percentage, larger projects smaller percentage.
- Administration only covers fiscal administration rather than capacity support in general.
- Discontent about processes should be looked at by OWEB, e.g. applying for grant monies, bookkeeping things. Should be streamlined and more thought through.
- There are a number of places where capacity could be improved other with than just cash. Years ago in cooperation with Association of Conservation Districts, OWEB hired somebody to do some QuickBooks trainings specific to OWEB fiscal application forms. We're in the position with sharing a fiscal person with a SWCD, working well for us. Sense I'm getting is that OWEB is no longer supporting that system – creating new documents and forms that will not be integrated into this system. Opportunity here to create capacity support by providing opportunity to make business support streamlined.
- Outside circumstances that affect our success as well as OWEB's success. Intent of supporting watershed councils has changed to its own bureaucracy. Using each other to justify our own existence. Takes away from getting stuff done on the ground.
- OWEB needs to work itself out of a job. Money needs to get to the ground where it needs to be rather than to support a larger bureaucracy. When landowners want to do projects, they ask themselves why get involved with another government entity/agency.
- If I'm doing my job well, we will be building, promoting, exporting and training a systems-based approach to all watershed council management. What are the strategic investments that can be made on organization management systems. What's the place-based operation – on the ground, stakeholder holder input etc, but what is non place-based – have a decentralized staff model (payroll, bookkeeping, HR, legal issues,

contracting support, engineering). How do we share in a way that we all don't have to do these things?

- Administrative funding – base funding for councils that is not project oriented. That now gives you a base to work from and that you can accomplish your projects with.
- OWEB has refrained from telling councils have to work or run. Might be more fiscally responsible to have an organization structure divided up into place based vs. non place based so we don't all have to spend the time doing the same fiscal things. Would eventually reduce overhead costs, more productive and really help watershed councils.
- I thought this was the point of the umbrella councils – having shared tech teams, shared administrative costs.
- Some times in dealing with staff in OWEB I don't feel a lot of respect – especially as a young woman.
- As a tax payer, I want to know where our money is being spent. On one hand I get irritated having to do the fiscal reporting, but I understand that they have to show how the money was spent.

What would be the consequences if OWEB funding disappeared?

- We would not survive.
- It may need to be an entitlement.
- There is only one source of funding.
- Not true – we have alternative funding sources – foundation funding etc.
- Some watershed councils could survive that do not depend on OWEB funding, but others would not.
- Other forms of support – streamlining procedures such that the costs of doing business are not as great. OWEB behaves like most agencies in that it responds to problems by developing new rules. If it comes to the attention of fiscal staff that somebody has found a loophole allowing them to spend money as it wasn't intended then staff comes up with a new rule – new form. Normal pattern will do this for a number of years and somebody will say this isn't working and there is a big revision/start over. May be getting toward the time that OWEB should take that look at administrative processes for administrative grant funding. Identify opportunities to simplify.
- We do spend a lot of time dealing with things that are not actually helping anyone. New coordinators handbook that the Network put together is good on the intro level, but having a place in that notebook or website listing all the rules that must be followed for certain things.
- OWEB site could have some more help.
- Grant writing and education or workshops would be helpful. As council becomes a more successful, council need education on how to write grants.
- Evaluation criteria being based upon a 7th grade reading level. If we need to be writing at a 7th grade level then it needs to be in an OWEB document unless it's just a person's opinion.
- There are other organizations that help build capacity. You want to make things understandable – not using jargon. This 7th grade level means you have to write it clearly and in linear fashion – this is common practice.
- Would like to see OWEB improve ability to provide capacity at local level, on political level to work with larger scale funders who don't want to have to work with each individual watershed council, want to give large chunk of money – easy process. They

want to know if they give money to OWEB to increase capacity then they want to see that – people understand that without people on the ground you are not going to be able to get the restoration projects done. If we give you the money you are going to work with groups that are making a difference. Support watershed councils by working with larger foundations and then dispersing the funding to the various councils.

- Much better use of resources out there – administration funding, funneled through OWEB.
- Focus on national sources to fund councils. Network may be able to do this vs. OWEB due to legal restrictions.

Thoughts about a concept of a guaranteed pool of money matched with special initiative funding and a toolbox of shared services, e.g. auditing or other technical needs?

- Who is going to be paying for those shared technical resources?
- I think there are a number of things that might fit into that tool box, but not sure how the two funding buckets relate to what we've been talking about.
- Having a restoration engineer in some capacity would be a good idea. I don't know how you'd allocate it.
- Original intent to deal with restoration, education, economic development and the social element of the community building. Challenges you have is the funding source and the reliability of it. Create viable economic engine without having to rely on government funding sources. There are a lot of folks in this area that are retired and highly skilled in technical aspects.
- Isn't this what the technical assistance grants are for? Seems like it's already there.
- I agree that they are for that, but you could reduce the costs of technical assistance grants if you had a group of individuals that you could pull from, could be streamlined.
- We can get technical assistance grants and we appreciate them, but the process involves filling out an application, getting answer in six months, entering into grant agreement. If there were a few people on retainer and send a form describing a problem and is this something that one of these people could do in the next month.
- By the time you fill out the technical assistance grant, get the approval and retain the engineer, the costs are different.
- Special initiative side takes away from the guaranteed pool. Recipe for disaster.
- Would like to see, under shared technical support services, USGS and NOAA help support these shared services. More federal partners.
- Could take resources away from where they are needed unless it's really well structured. There are new exciting initiatives happening right now. All of them get funding and want to do the right thing. Thing that is driving them is the urgency to do priority things for priority reasons. We're not going to twist anything unless we fit into key boxes. Size and way we do projects don't fit into these priorities. We do opportunistic projects with willing land owners. Need key filtering mechanism.
- That's a challenge we're all going to have no matter what – wouldn't just be challenge with this technical assistance box.

Thoughts about umbrella councils?

- I think Mid Coast was the first Umbrella; we took that on in 1999. Overlapping council support issue, so GWEB convinced us to join together as an umbrella. Not going to claim reasons are all financial for lack of success, but the amount of support was not

really enough to make it work well, particularly not enough to have a functioning central office with satellite groups as part of the issue. General pattern has been for OWEB to promote umbrella organizations where there are several smaller groups in close proximity and then to, in my opinion, under-fund them. My sense is that it is not working well anywhere around the state. Tension, request to break up the structure. What needs to happen is that OWEB needs to make some hard decisions on what they expect from umbrellas and levels of support that it would actually take to meet those objectives. Number of options – abolish the concept, continue to support the concept but provide adequate funding (takes money away from others), may be 3rd or 4th options with different structures or concepts on what the role should actually be. Current approach is not very functional.

- Watershed councils are individual non-profit organizations. Only method by which they can be controlled by OWEB is if we want OWEB's funding. Umbrellas do exist. OWEB doesn't have the ability to absolve or create.
- Don't see a lot of incentive to be an umbrella, work as partners and respect each other. We don't have any reason to be with an umbrella.
- Alsea was under the umbrella and broke off and we are seeing that the umbrella concept is a good one – reduce overhead, technical coordinator and basic planning team people. But the reality of it was that it just didn't work for us. Large geographic area with few people – they want to make their own decisions. We're trying to work with issues – had mediation session, 100s of hours spent on this. Support grant fell apart after a joint agreement to complete it together. Doesn't think that OWEB not telling Watershed Councils how to work has worked very well.
- General council support process and lack of communication with me as a coordinator by OWEB; I have never felt so disrespected.
- Would like to see OWEB encourage partnerships between the watershed councils. The way OWEB system is set up is actually pitting councils against each other. Nobody really understands how decisions are made and the priorities are set.
- Transparency – greater transparency from OWEB.
- Most successful models of government investments are through the use of incentives rather than told how to spend it or do it. Unless you incentivize through resources then most people won't participate. Incentivizing the idea of umbrellas through adequate funding and is by nature is cooperative.
- Centralizing management support systems but not centralizing local decision making.
- Fiscal agency could certainly be centralized and that would help a lot.
- Decentralization of the decision making process – OWEB could say this is your pool of money within this organization. From tech perspective it should have technical merit and results, but the decision making process has always been moved back to Salem.
- I'd like to see a solution that would let us be creative about sharing resources on a council-to-council basis. There are some things that could be shared on a larger scale. OWEB structure now makes it difficult. Political issues getting in the way is not productive; we all want to be doing to things we care about.
- Administrative rule in place that causes some of these problems. Local government recognition. Right now Mid Coast is funded to work in the Alsea but the Alsea is not funded to work in the Alsea. Constant battle with each other rather than being partnering organizations. We don't want to battle – the system creates this.

- If OWEB wants to truly look at this as making people come together or wanting to come together you have to get rid of some of these administrative rules. Today we are spending thousands of dollars that could have been better spent in council support funding. Staff and consultant time and travel, etc.
- It is a valid thing to cut back on the largest funding groups and spread it around a little more and encourage councils to find other funding sources. Unhealthy to rely solely on OWEB funding. We need to be diversified in our funding. Force this issue to those who rely solely on OWEB funding.
- Each council is a non-profit and should have the ability to have the independence to work in an area with ways of deciding to work together. I believe that the Mid Coast Watershed Council has done amazing things, Alsea has done amazing things. Neither should be each other's boss. The more that you can encourage partnerships that it would be to the advantages of the watershed. OWEB is causing friction among the watershed councils – we are all partners, we are all working together for the benefit of the watershed and restoration. Need to incentivize.
- Driving this is how many councils do you fund around the state? Do we put a cap on the number of councils are funded or do we revise the model? Redesign the whole support system – technical drives things, know the priority assessments – we are going to incentivize the existing watershed councils on certain criteria. Funding too much capacity building for people who don't necessarily have the skills. What are watershed councils really for? Are they really for putting projects on the ground? What are the priority areas? Asking coordinators to do projects on the ground when they were hired for the coordination skills – asking too much, asking different skills and what are we funding? I want the outcomes on the ground, but that's just me.
- Councils are diverse and see value in watershed councils having different specialties. Wouldn't want that to be lost. Some areas education is the main thing that can be accomplished.
- Umbrella and tool box of resources – could pay less to a coordinator if they are just an administrator, but then in your tool box you could have the technical, fiscal, education experts.
- Really hard to justify providing council support for one full time person for an area that 40k acres and another that has one million.
- Place-based services vs. centralized services. Three legged stool – funding designed for place-based activities, way to fund aggregate systems management stuff and to be a projects funder. Step away from models and look at funding streams for these three areas. Desegregation of councils for the administrative/aggregate i.e. fiscal, bookkeeping etc.
- One of the things that concerns me is that you have such a short window with land owner cooperation on big projects. Recovering a stream or river in a large section with multiple property owners – when a grant is applied for those multiple property owners have an expectation of project being accepted and funded, when that doesn't happen the support of the land owner partner's changes.

<u>What are the two or three highest priorities for improving council support funding?</u>

- Broaden the pie is a good idea.
- If the umbrella concept is to continue it needs some serious rethinking and work.

- Don't just deny a council who has been working really hard for years to be the local provider because of an administrative rule.
- Finding ways for incentives for partnerships to work together.
- Flexibility to support the diversity of councils and the diversity of methods of working together.
- Respect – improvement of.
- Place-based vs. aggregate.
- What are they going to look like if they don't get funding – what's the next strategy.
- Reaffirming or relooking at what the purpose of the WC is, current and future. Was the past purpose met and if not how to we change it?
- Transparency.

OPEN CONVERSATION
(Watershed council representative comments/questions in italics; OWEB staff responses in regular text)

In terms of allocating council support, whatt has caused me aggravation is the way the process is set up, the review and then out of that comes the ranking. That ranking is then taken by staff and the amount of money available is brought together – some of the fundamental decisions in that room need to be more open and earlier in the process. Difference in dollars between lowest and highest ranked councils – would like to see. Rubs with system is that the tendency has been over the history of OWEB is the definition of merit has been getting squeezed. Difference between dollars for lowest and highest ranked has been squeezed – small spread. Lot of energy goes into the process on both sides for the minimal difference in funding that you get. At what level does this cease to honor the legislature requirement of a merit based system? Is this addressing the more fundamental policy that is ultimately implementing the Oregon Plan? What is going to be the most effective strategy? How to allocate X amount of dollars to Y list of councils.

We struggle when we go through council review process. We know stakes are high, we want to support you to the greatest extent that we can. Review board, staff and OWEB Board really put a lot into this. How many hats are you expected to wear? It's not realistic given the resources that are available. We struggle with this.

Specific suggestion – prior to the grant application due date; make at least a tentative decision about a funding formula.

The more information we can communicate up front would be helpful and we are going to try to do as much as possible.

Or also set a base line funding i.e. every council gets $75k rather than the merit based council support funding system we have but if you qualify at a certain level you get this guaranteed funding.

If we went in this direction we could distribute funds pro-rata across the board and if you reach a certain merit threshold you qualify to receive the base level funding.

How does funding direction or initiative process affect the guaranteed pool?

One way to look at grant program – is that there are 2 colors of money – capital funds and non-capital funds. Capital funds are the greatest amount of dollars that we have – and can only be used for on the ground restoration projects and acquisitions that are actually implemented. Capital funds cannot be used for general operating expenses, education grants or technical assistance grants. Lottery non-capital resources are the much smaller pie – defined by the legislature. Historically when you look at funds for non-capital grants, the vast majority have been federal salmon dollars. Only in recent years have we been able to use non-capital lottery funds in this arena. Acquisitions are funded with capital dollars and do not take away from our non-capital resources.

Suggest hybrid model for funding – base amount for if you meet certain requirements then they get X dollars in funding, if they can then make a really good case that they need more because of Y reason then they could get a hire amount. Having a base amount might help.

That's an idea that others have come up with this week as well.

That was always the understanding or feeling in talking to people who wrote the original legislation. That was the emphasis of the grassroots aspect of these WCs. How that's changed/morphed over time – why or how?

I have heard some say their understanding is that the framework of the Oregon Plan was that the state funds would be temporary to get watershed councils off the ground and then state funds would no longer be needed. There are varied perceptions out there of the original purposes.

How the bar has risen – initial idea with Oregon Plan is that watershed councils would be doing things with a lot of volunteer work and through last 20 years the realization has developed as to what is important to develop and implement the Oregon Plan has been increasingly technical and expensive. Asked for a lot more information in our grant applications now - that is one of the drivers for the need of capacity today.

I've seen the trend for larger, more complex projects. I don't think we want to signal that we want everyone to scale up and be those big ticket/big project providers. There is room for all types of projects.

I think that it's hard to talk about Watershed Councils and their role independent of the Oregon Plan – was supposed to be a three legged stool - agencies, WC and level playing field by enforcement of environmental rules. Only recently there is beginning to be enforcement. There has been no incentive for folks to do voluntarily because there has been no consequences. Watershed council funding out of that concept. Size of basins – payment based on area but it's also based on the priorities. Formulated approach is very good. Building capacity – those that are well functioning, they shouldn't have to fill out an application every year and half and spend all this time if we know they are doing good work. Formulated approach - we are going to continue funding you for a 5 or 6 year period, while new ones that haven't been funded submit applications until proven. Concerned that unless we look at watershed councils – know what we

want them to accomplish, what their roles are and are there are those other two legs, then I don't know if we'll meet our goals.

One thing that might help with support money, if OWEB let it be known to other partners that you are reducing support funding. You may be able to get other partners to support capacity.

The trick would be to enlighten other funders about the value of investing their dollars with us.

This is not just the capacity funding – it's across the board.

Formulaic approach – transparency in decision making is important, but formulaic approach will lose flexibility and may not be appropriate. Important to take into size of watershed and what councils are doing. Just have to be extremely careful and allow flexibility.

Original intent of legislature was to only fund council support for a period of time. If a program was viable then they would then stand on their own merit through other funding sources and organizations. But unfortunately we didn't fund all organizations so right off the bat we skewed the process. Transparency and accountability are huge.

Having a hybrid evaluation – for the base amount that a basin or subbasin council gets maybe think about exactly what you want the council to do – what basic functions i.e. having an office, 25% of coordinators time to develop projects, etc., set low level basic functions that you'd like to support and let that be your base level that you fund. If you are going to stick with the umbrella council model I think you should consider sub-basin and evaluate them – if they meet criteria give them the base amount.

1. Would like to ask OWEB to go to legislature and ask for permanent funding for council support and watersheds. 2. If a council does not get OWEB support then they have a hard time getting support from other sources – "why aren't you funded through OWEB?" 3. We need to echo system based thinking – where are we at with the landowners right now (should have higher priority than an agency due to small window of availability). How do you get cooperation by landowners that don't want to cooperate? Landowners feel it's their land and they feel they should have the decision about what happens to it – what one person does effects the whole watershed. Stronger base in the state and federal government to actually recognize what WCs do on the ground. Government is not thinking system-wide enough. Mitigation fairness. Need to build bridges not mistrust.

Permanent funding for Watershed Councils – we're actually as good as we can get in that regard. I agree that having OWEB funding adds credibility to get other funding sources. There can be a limited window with landowners and it's a challenge – how can project implementers with all the hoops you have to jump through – how do you thread the needle with the time you have? One thing that came up in the last meeting was a request for OWEB to be more proactive with federal and state partners to streamline permitting processes. OWEB should continue to make the case that restoration projects should not have to go through the same regulatory hoops as non-restoration projects such as development.

LISTENING SESSION #4
Date: March 1, 2010
Location: Salem, Oregon; Marion County Fire District Office
Attendees: Representatives of 16 watershed council representatives, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, two OWEB board members and staff

Tom Byler, OWEB Director, provided opening comments similar to those reported above for the Hillsboro session.

What defines a successful Watershed Council?

- When you become the go-to group for whatever area you serve.
- Name recognition.
- Landowner participation in projects.
- High school sciences classes are participating in our projects.
- Diverse cross section of community involvement, variety of stakeholders engaged.
- Accomplishing conservation and restoration on the ground.
- Got enough funding or money to accomplish those on the ground projects (adequately funded).
- Organization is meeting measurable objectives that you have set out. Adequate funding from diverse sources.
- Not being able to accommodate those who request services.
- Increasing attendance at special events.
- Measurably improving the health of the watershed.
- Having some internal structure – method to madness. Procedures/policies so it's just not a free for all.
- Active board, fiscal policies that make sure finances are taken care of in responsible and transparent manner.
- Having active partnerships with other agencies in local area.

What would be the consequences if OWEB funding disappeared?

- OWEB is the vehicle to fund the Oregon Plan – it's the primary seed/funding source. Majority of councils couldn't do their part.
- Most would cease to function.
- Important source of capacity funding – challenge to get it and couldn't replace it from other sources.
- In an ideal world, even if each council was getting majority of funding from other sources it would be unrealistic to function.
- Framing it in this way could make us value OWEB's funding and all funding sources a little more.
- Majority of ability to function with on-the-ground projects would go away even with just taking away council support.
- If OWEB wasn't around councils would look at lot different today. Sees a variety of different models. Project types and management type would be a lot different from where we are today.

What can OWEB do to help councils be successful?

- Liability insurance and workman's comp insurance.

- Health insurance pool.
- Services that OWEB could provide to councils as a group rather than on own that are expensive.
- Looking at other capacity pieces, e.g. GIS, insurance, Quick Books. Program reps have so much of their capacity taken up by grant management.
- Flexibility in funding – fiscal requirements and reporting requirement are continuing to be more and more strict. Paying consultants large sums on projects while restricting in-house staff. We can't pay for a chair or phone for a person who supports projects. Technical ability in-house – tightening funding in narrow way threatens objective of the community and social structure of long-term stewardship.
- Another funding flexibility issue – if we do something that requires design and engineering and finish with on-the-ground work – we have to figure out how to bank-roll design and engineering pieces due to funding requirements.
- More flexibility built into the project side so they could be more performance based – more freedom to use percentage of monies for the overhead associated with those projects.
- As we see more watersheds come into play – some with marginal return vs. those with restoration of fish runs are eminent – how do we prioritize how dollars are dispersed? Based upon ability to be successful?

With the available funding, are we accomplishing what we need to; are we adequately implementing the Oregon Plan?

- Oregon Plan is such a lofty piece, complicates these processes. When you ask about prioritization, you have to really look at what your goal is in the first place.
- Intent of watershed councils isn't just what you do but how you do it. Measurable ecological developments but the question is could it also be done through RFPs and consultants. How it gets done in this collaborative community based way – that in itself should have some weight. Methodology should have some outcome statements associated with community-based side of things.
- Customer service side – political capacity issues. It would be nice to see things standardized in terms of outcomes on the education side, etc. Show outcomes for those capacity support dollars.
- Structure of the grants with so many pots makes it difficult to approach our mission strategically and adaptively. Very stop / start approach. Like the idea of including large overhead component in education and outreach grants to fund the capacity that goes along with those projects.
- Clarifying what council support money is for. Most of the smaller councils have to use council support funding to do the pre-project stuff to actually get the project running.
- Individual councils have a better idea about how the money should be spent in their community. A single model will not fit each council – there needs to be more flexibility at lower reaches, can be monitoring by outcomes.

Given limited funding, should the number of councils that are funded be limited?

- If we have a static funding base, then we need to make some hard decisions.
- Incentive to disaggregate – how do we serve the purposes and reach and engage people at the local level – all kinds of examples of organizations that have reached into lots of

small places with even centralized administrative systems rather than the re-creation of all aspects that is involved in watershed council management.

- There is a lot of getting restoration on the ground, but we see groups that don't have to deal with overhead like we do. Can we get more flexibility at a statute level, so we can have more flexibility at the local level? Allocating funding that is definitely available at a regional level. Intermittent funding is an issue. Makes sense to not have to go back to the drawing board for all funding.
- Serious reservations about limiting number of councils. What's the number we are talking about and what benefit would that provide to remaining councils that weren't cut? How can we get more capacity with alternative funding sources without talking about cutting?

Is there a minimum funding level that should be instituted for council support?

- Kind of how it's operated thus far, board has tried to look at watershed council function.
- Going the wrong way with allowing splinter councils and allowing councils in really small areas.
- There are quite a few areas that don't have watershed councils – has to be some sort of way to incorporate these areas – probably have some sort of critical resources to assist with restoration. Not little tiny watershed councils – but incorporating smaller areas with others.
- If you want to allow new groups to form and invite them into the fold it should be tied to an increase of funding. Adequate level of funding for capacity.
- Most important thing that we do is work with the people who own the land that we want to improve / restore. Facilitator of that community desire / vision. That's what I think we'd lose if we started to aggregate too much – 10 mega councils would not have that level of connection with the community. Delicate balancing act that OWEB has to play to maintain that local ownership / vision / interaction.
- Consider what the landowners want. Landowner doesn't want to have to drive far to go to a meeting – they'd prefer 100+ Watershed Councils rather than 60.
- In the Willamette region especially, when we talk about size we are talking about a population vs geographic area. If we do one project it might be small land base but reaches a lot of people.
- The problem is that there aren't enough resources to adequately fund more and more individual organizations. So what we're trying to do is reach landowners on a local level and move the ecological dial. For me, there are some pragmatic things that need to be considered. Look at place based – outreach, involvement, education project oversight etc. Non place-based – HR, legal support, contracting, insurances, financial management, audit, high level engineering, bookkeeping. Seems a lot of this second list can be centralized. Freed up of these non-place-based tasks so that we can be freed up to do the outreach and projects, etc.
- Needs to be a happy medium. Have to explore some kind of efficiency, but not sure how it would work best.
- Not talking about mega councils. Centralizing systems. Local ownership and control but aggregating those things that take up time.
- You can still have localized staff and not have council coordinators time being sucked up with certain issues. We're at a point where there is very limited dollars. Is there a way that we can share some economies of scales for certain tasks.

- We've been having these conversations for at least 4 years. Very important that the OWEB process be a logic continuum. An entity like the Network to set up "best practices", there is a way out there to make more efficient and streamline processes. There could be some standardization of the processes. Could try a group liability plan and see if it works.
- Individualized areas with shared person do the bookkeeping etc. This would be helpful.
- Fiscal administration is limited to 10% of the grant for capacity support. Still the issue of how we distribute that 10%. Distribution formula doesn't account for that.
- Reluctant or concerned about asking OWEB to provide us with a bunch of new services – where would the funding come from?
- Support and standardization of systems. There isn't really anyone helping to support councils on these administrative functions. If we don't have flexibility on top of this it gets us coming every way. If we don't have support, standardization or training then we need to increase the flexibility. The less we have, the more flexible we need to be, but also support learning from each other.
- When you want us to do something that isn't in the scope, such as participation in recovery planning processes, we have to find dollars. Such requests need to be accompanied by funding.
- Local councils all have different issues. All these broader plans want council involvement where they all think we are funded by OWEB, we can only do so much. We want to do more but only have so much funding.
- Recognition when we are submitting council support grants, i.e.. time spent on recovery planning or other entity/agency initiatives being valued on the council support grant applications.
- More time towards restoration but you can't take away from attending meetings/relationship creation, but restoration gets you funding.

Thoughts about umbrella councils?

- Thus far – the funding umbrella councils receive isn't enough of an incentive.
- When it means multiple councils under one support grant it doesn't seem to help or work. Partnerships (regional) seem to work better when they find each other.
- We get this asked every two years – few examples around the state where they cover more geographic region – they drive more, I call more people. I really wish we would have more of a go-team approach about the council support discussion. We don't have enough money and never have. We need to foster environment where councils are learning from each other – we're already at a competitive business model but it would be great to be pushing the collaborative model more.
- Double edged sword – could access more resources as they are larger entity.

What can OWEB do to help you develop and strengthen partnerships?

- Concern with making things too specific – each council operates differently. Various partnerships may not be appropriate in certain regions. Depends on specific area.
- Critically important, but at the same time I'm a little wary of having OWEB or anybody incentivizing them, it gets away from organic approach to partnerships.
- There are a lot of false partnerships and you have to be careful why they form. Better for OWEB to incentivize other entities to partner with watershed councils. How are watershed councils supposed to know what's going on in their watershed all the time?

Great if other entities are calling us. Reporting requirement in council support grant has us reporting to all of our local partners in the county/region.

- Partnerships and umbrellas have so much in common – they have to start out locally. Biggest problem is personalities. Have to be developed as it makes sense rather than somebody up high saying that the partnership / umbrella should be established.
- Hear common themes – umbrella / partnerships and carrying incentives around it – chasing the wrong tail. Councils have the ability to be creative on the ground what partnerships would save money and make sense but are getting distracted by all these check marks on the support applications – micro-management prohibiting us from doing what we do best.
- There are different models for different types of umbrellas and relationships. It is a big fear that somebody else will be deciding what is happening in their watershed – you have to have a strong leader. You can dispel those kinds of fears then there should be a sharing of ideas and good process to have different types of projects without someone from one telling another what should happen in their watershed. Doesn't mean that you're losing resources by combining watersheds – can be a strength.
- Network is a broad-based group organized around trying to improve permitting and funding integration of major projects. Integrated water resources concept. Network has spent a lot of time with councils in one-on-one to mediate relationship challenges that have existed.
- State level partnerships that the Network has brought to bear have been really important. Brought partners in at the state legislative level. Looking forward to more private funding partnerships and Network has been instrumental in helping with this.

Application process – what's working and what isn't?

- Key criteria for evaluating council performance in the past has been the number of projects you completed in the previous biennium. Some of us have projects that go beyond the biennium scope – how do we get credit for work done on those longer projects?
- It has improved over time, more streamlined. Great difference based on how written and what asking for – much clearer. They've really tried to allow flexibility in that process – felt like I was able to tell the story of my council. Very important because we are all different. Judged based on what all reviewers are seeing but also really on your story.
- As a new coordinator and submitting the first application, have really struggled withy the grant application and review process. Our council being compared to a council that has a fiscal policy and good bylaws for the last 10 years is going to look different. Better to compare to your council two years ago vs. another council.
- Very helpful to have council training sessions on the support application process. Instructions and supplemental documentation – most important to have embedded spreadsheet.
- Not wanting to see the whole thing redone before next round for the "copy and paste" aspect.
- Even a subtle change in wording in a question makes it a completely different question. Resist urge to add more questions. Has got to a point where it is really useful and streamlined.

- It's a lot better – not perfect, more room to tell a story. Don't want to see any major changes. Major frustrations and questions – what do they do with it? They get a paragraph back. "Application hard to understand, very unclear but we know they do good work so they're excellent." What's coming back is somewhat confusing. Same answer to same question between two applications and vastly different rankings. Clarifying the ranking would be helpful.
- We appreciated that for the 2005/7 council support you could call and get your scores and there was a quantitative score which didn't exist in this last round. "Got 3 of 4 here and we got dinged because of this" was very helpful. Transparency.
- Council support review process is about building that trust. If we can understand where we stand and why. Will also build trust among Watershed Councils so that we can build partnerships, share resources. There is no transparency, we're in competition with each other and it's not clear why.
- Some of the remarks are mystifying. If there are questions, somebody in the review process should call. Then we would at least be able to explain if there was a question.
- Do feel it's a lot about what is communicated in the grant application and how that in the past it was ranked by how we've done in the past vs. the biennium review. May warrant some sort of site visit or meeting – move away from the competitive aspect.
- Was surprised to see that you got ranked and got a set amount of money but no relationship to what you asked for according to your budget. You need to recognize that we all live in different watersheds – don't have a lot of restoration landowner potential in urban environment. Hard to give us flexibility but if you're not doing a lot of restoration in your watershed then you are penalized. Needs to match up.
- Why are watershed councils ranked rather just dividing the funds equally like for SWCDs? To foster partnerships you should just divide up equally; some councils would need more. Why ranking in the first place?

How is the merit based system working?

- Councils were ranked almost to the dollar; I like how most councils tend to be lumped in the good, very good and excellent ranking. Why should a high performing council accept less than a council that isn't performing?
- Other challenges – why are you ranked the way you are is unclear so in reality there is ambiguity – let's recognize the ones that are functioning well in their watersheds the way they are intending too.
- Dynamic around OWEB trying to measure effectiveness of councils and it's the how that happens and what you have to do to prove it that creates tension. Agreed upon effectiveness indicators, from both OWEB and grantees? Whether or not consideration looking at organization life cycles and stages; the way we judge a teenager is different that we would an adult or child. Should this be a factor in evaluating? Has Oregon considered operational watershed life cycle? Each project/watershed plan has stages – where people are at and system around that stage i.e. in restoration stage vs. education stage.
- I'm saying the ranking system is looking at everybody in the same way, but should look at the context in the life cycle of each council.
- Who is better able to know what an effective council is than those councils? Self-governed, standards and practices established within the group and then the funder

approve and make a decision. Everybody has the same interest – being effective, but how you measure is where there are tension/issues.

- Should move from 5 tiers to 3 tiers. Get a warning and have to go through a process to prove that you're going to improve. If not, out for one cycle – then show you that you have reformed and you'll get funding again.

Thoughts about a concept of a guaranteed pool of money matched with special initiative funding and a toolbox of shared services, e.g. auditing or other technical needs?

- I see funding pool being split evenly as being less flexible, who knows what guaranteed amount is and then having to apply for special funding that you need. Does that include all council support funding that is there now for the guarantee pot or is it divided up for both pools guaranteed and special funding initiatives.
- Concept overall has merit, things to consider – additional time taken in applying for additional add-ons to bring council support to what it may have been; overhead funding to being limited to 10%, with that we're also putting a lot of funding on the ground which is our focus, functioning at bare bones as is – hard to give answer.
- What if renewal language and what OWEB funding might look like in a year from now – one is grant side, one is the non-grant side and the other is the box of services that OWEB is already trying to do. Council capacity – non-grant, other funding grant based. On grant side provide a percentage of those grants. Implementation costs on the grant side. Tool box – services provided around capacity issues that are central to everybody that OWEB is already trying to provide.
- What we are trying to do is invest in the watershed and have it spin off into restoration, grant writing, etc. See this model as fragmentation – if you start fragmenting council support you start fragmenting coordinator. At some level you can't keep patching it together.
- Do a survey of watersheds to ask this question – how many hours a month, year do you spend doing community outreach or various agency meetings. Successful watershed list – most of the list is community involvement – you're the person who goes to all these meetings, you're the local expert – you're the go-to group. Diverse involvement – more to some of this that we may think.

What are the two or three highest priorities for improving council support funding?

- Every council is unique; we've tried for many, many years to have a good ranking process. We wouldn't be having these meetings if we've achieved this. More even distribution – stable hub of funding as small as it may be and then if you can find the partnerships to leverage on that. Efforts at defining performance base have improved but are still questionable. Not fair to rank reforming group against established large group, 15 year projects against two year projects. Simplify – stable hub of funding – moving towards a more equal and even distribution in terms of council support. May also require additional conversation – if all get same amount etc. (Group agreed).
- Good if solutions were found from these conversations and moved on rather than having to have the conversation again.
- Don't under-fund council support.
- Simplification of application for council support, time could be spent better doing other things.

- Recognize that we are unique, just maintaining the funding seems to be the most important thing, understand that responsibility lies in a number of places. Let's not complicate the application any more or radically change it.
- Surprised by documentation requirements – seem to be getting worse instead of improving. Not sure why that is, we do it and live with it. Know other government agencies operate without such restrictions.
- Taking into account differences among watershed councils, finding a way to grade them based on differences, not necessarily basing the merit on number of projects but quality. Streamline process of application and reporting. Making reports as easy as possible.
- Streamlining application and reporting aspect.
- Like to see us not subsidize project work with capital funding and vice versa.
- No new councils and no splintering unless the overall funding pie increases.
- Go-team attitude instead of parent-child relationship with OWEB board. Integrating councils fully within landscape of Oregon Plan institutions – encouraging partnerships instead of constantly writing another requirement.
- Supporting broader access to technical services on a more spontaneous level would support project development or consultant approval partners. Three-tiered concept (guaranteed pool, special initiative and tool box) does make sense to me and would be nice to have additional conversation but makes sense in terms of grant and funding process.
- Don't like splitting grant monies to multiple pools as it further fragments the available funding. Might work better – application in context of our own strategic plan and what we need in terms of council support. Measured against our own local needs and plans rather than cookie cutter approach to fit the diversity of the councils across the state.

OPEN CONVERSATION
(Watershed council representative comments/questions in italics; OWEB staff responses in regular text)

Since there is not going to be substantive changes in this upcoming process, what about splintering umbrellas?

There are two important questions for OWEB's June Board meeting – do we fund new councils and how do we deal with requests to split off from umbrellas and apply to OWEB for individual council support funding? You will know well in advance of the application deadline what the outcome of this is.

Could you comment on building partnerships? What are your ideas about incentivizing partnerships?

I agree that the fact that other agencies desire to have council input is a mark of success. You're not a flash in the pan – you're institutionalized in people's minds. It's a burden at the same time as you're being pulled in a lot of different directions. We struggle trying to measure your success knowing you're all unique and there are many ways to reflect your successes. Are there ways that OWEB can help reconnect partnerships – I don't know, I'd like to think that the carrot we have can create some opportunities – the challenge is, many of our agency partners at the

state or federal level have fewer resources than they did 10 years ago. That's going to be a constant challenge for us. It's harder to have partnerships when all of us are struggling with capacity. I'm open to ideas that you all have on how we can incent partnerships.

Personally and from an OWEB-centric standpoint, OWEB cannot replace relationships and partnerships that you build locally. One area that OWEB could be of service would be to work on our own partnerships that would benefit all of you – OWEB could build stronger relationships with other funders to encourage them to direct funding towards the projects that you all are doing. No one funds capacity. The opportunity for OWEB would be to encourage funders to fund capacity and help them understanding the value of that investment.

Is there way to be creative with how you fund technical and monitoring applications? Do you have to fund with non-capital dollars?

Technical assistance and monitoring applications have to be funded with non-capital dollars unless they are directly tied to an OWEB-funded, on-the-ground restoration or acquisition project that has been implemented. We look for capital opportunities as much as we can.

LISTENING SESSION #5

Date: March 2, 2010
Location: Redmond, Oregon
Attendees: Representatives of 6 watershed council representatives, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, OWEB board members and staff

Lauri Aunan, Grants Program Manager, provided opening comments similar to those reported above for the Hillsboro session.

What defines a successful Watershed Council?

- It's subjective – its county dependent, depends on your county and your clientele.
- Communication and trust in your community, relationships with the community, projects on the ground, partnerships.
- Implementing high quality on-the-ground projects – defines success with our council.
- Outreach and education throughout the community about what we're doing.
- If people know about the WC and know we're there and what we're doing.
- Depends on the life cycle of the watershed – one council just gaining landowner trust, another has it already, another working with the high school for education / outreach.
- Meeting goals.
- Success in not about having a great many projects at one time but projects we have are successful. Our board is struggling with our identity – high turnover recently.
- Success is a layered deal. People know who you are. Good landowner relationship, successful projects.

What would be the consequences if OWEB funding disappeared?

- Some of the more people dense and larger councils have higher capacity and could potentially survive. Our smaller councils rely on OWEB to keep us afloat.

- Unanimous among the group that it would be difficult to survive.

What is an adequate level of OWEB funding?

- We job share and we're both only being paid for about 20 hours per week when we're working more like 30. We get a lot done, but there is just not the dollars to stretch it.
- Council support award does not fully fund a full time position.
- Pretty well funded with OWEB funds, don't have a lot of other funds, but have a lot of in-kind support i.e. county providing office and local phone, OSU covers internet service, does not have benefits.
- we work closely with NRCS to support each other.
- Council support funds my position, we don't have a lot of partners in the county. We have the wind towers and our county has benefited tremendously. Rely a lot on OWEB, they provided us with over 60% of our funding for projects in the last year.

Are we accomplishing what we need to with the available funding?

- We could accomplish much more with more staff.
- More interesting to measure success from the bottom up. The purpose of OWEB simply is to implement the Oregon Plan. If we had it our way we would increase the WC support.
- Council support – we all look at our projects as success in what we can complete. There are not other places that we can get council support – you need staff to complete the projects. We can get support for projects from other sources / partnerships.
- Less than ½ project funding comes from OWEB, but most if not all of our council support funding comes from OWEB.

Given limited funding, should funding of new councils be limited?

- Who decides that – WC gets to decide who and what it is.
- We are all very individual. We have to take that into consideration.
- Councils in the valley that are small land wise, but it works for them. It would not work for us. We can't say you need larger or smaller areas to each other. We shouldn't look at the number of councils – take into account the area that they cover and make sure they are getting projects accomplished.
- Pie keeps getting cut smaller and smaller with every new council created – less funding for the ones that are already around. Shouldn't dictate who can start a council but at some point need to put a limit on how many they support. I personally have a hard time cutting that piece of pie smaller and smaller. Not discouraging new ones from forming but put a cap on the number that OWEB will fund.
- You can't say "no, you can't become a council," but at a point what are you going to improve by becoming a council – maybe you could combine with another.

How is the merit-based system for council support funding working?

- Stressful having to define your success as a council and to justify every two years that you deserve to have capacity funding, but would not be fair for funding to automatically be dolled out evenly.
- Need to better articulate what we have done or what we feel were our successes.
- Various levels of funding make sense.

- Incentive based – we are all different how to you measure success between completely different councils?
- How does OWEB evaluate this when each of us is unique different (council capacity) seems a bit unfair, should be more of a local decisions. Local board knows if you're meeting the capacity needs of your local area.
- We were pretty frustrated that we ranked in the same category as two years ago when there was probably 100Xs more work done. Disheartening. Spent all this time on the grant and had the same level of funding. From my point of view it would be great to split the council support 60 even ways, but that's not fair to those councils doing a lot more work and covering more area.
- Two ways in which current system could be improved: 1) continuously giving lower funds to lower councils does not help them improve; 2) penalizes councils who have defined their niche as not necessarily an on the ground project council but spend their energies elsewhere – i.e. outreach, education.

With lower-performing councils, what should be the criteria for receiving continued funding?

- You need to figure out why not improving – if it's because of funding then it's not fair to penalize them because they are trying.
- Sometimes it takes time to build trust and get projects going on the ground with private landowners.
- Council and district goals – we're getting a lot done and we have a lot of landowner involvement but we didn't rank very well in the application process. Every area is unique. Maybe more travel done by OWEB to see what councils are doing, give reasons why they are doing the projects they are doing. More OWEB involvement in understanding the bigger picture – see firsthand – can only read so many reports and applications.

Thoughts about the effectiveness of umbrella councils?

- Ours is working really well, covers 5 watersheds. We more efficiently get more work done.
- Has encouraged more of a board formation, board members are now stepping up to the plate.
- We weren't funded as an umbrella council – we have 4 watersheds under our umbrella. We didn't get funding because the 4 councils that we umbrella over were/are not necessarily active even though we have board members from each of the 4 councils. Would be a mess if we didn't combine as an umbrella. Told to do it and then didn't get worked well for us.
- If we wanted to split off it would be fine but funding separately would be hard to get. We are such a small area that I don't think they would want to – wouldn't have the community support.

What kind of incentives can OWEB offer to encourage partnering?

- Our partners look at OWEB as a good thing and if we are involved with OWEB that alone is enough to get support.

- Would be great if somebody could provide a middle level of planning for groups if they want to partner, how to best use resources to gain partnerships. Not sure if this is OWEB's role.
- So many partners that we don't have a clue about. Network does a great job helping us find partners. Very important – most of the funding requires some kind of match. Don't think you can have too many.
- Very important, I have been one of the lucky people as there were a lot of partnerships established before I came on so it is just been maintaining. But we could be shown other sources that would be great.
- Hard to sift through looking for specifically funders who have an interest in watershed issues and would be willing to fund in this region. Each funder has specific area of interest and location.

Thoughts about a concept of a guaranteed pool of money matched with special initiative funding and a toolbox of shared services, e.g. auditing or other technical needs?

- Great idea – would have to be regional and would still need local technical assistance team. Have local team but this toolbox would be great on regional level.
- Definitely something to think about, would improve the process to implement at least some of this. A lot for the Board to think about.
- Has some potential – like the base funding. Toolbox is great – not sure how to decide who gets the last engineer. Umbrella services – trying to pick health insurance right now, if we had a good plan at cheaper rate that would be very helpful.
- Could make a more solid foundation for all of us, give us some stability. Weak areas with the toolbox could be very beneficial.
- A lot to look at there but sounds like a good direction to look in.
- If there was an economical way to provide health benefits that would be great.
- I like all of this but I do have questions about the toolbox approach. How divvied up and where funds come from – from pool that we're already using for education etc? Don't want it to pull from my funds to be divvied up between the State.

How are the grant application and review processes working?

- It gets easier every year.
- It is long and it takes a lot of time to compile. But we do use that document a lot. A good way to see what you have accomplished as you're always moving forward so fast that you don't always see what's your completed.
- Each council is unique, we were in a unique position tied with SWCD, considered partnership but was considered as a ding against us. We could split from them but it just doesn't make sense as have all these resources because of this partnership. Application gives you space to explain those things, not sure if I'm just not explaining it well or if we were perceived as too close to the SWCD. Only 1400 people in Wheeler County, we have people that serve on the two boards. They are my fiscal agent – I pay them 10% so that leaves that much more for us to do projects.
- There are some projects that one could not get done without the other. Dinged due to this partnership.
- I do not know if they understand the significance of partnerships that we have with the SWCD. WC also does a lot for the SWCD. Application makes it look like we don't need OWEB support because we could just get it from the SWCD.

- While it's valuable for us to measure our success with the application process, it's hard to put this into someone else's hand to determine the success of our watershed.
- Comments received from review team are very valuable to us as a council.
- It's easy to get tunnel vision so comments are valuable – make us open our eyes, think outside the box.
- Some reviewers' comments can be a little frustrating. I have certain practices that my council is comfortable with and some of the comments come back why aren't you doing this or that, but the council is satisfied so there is a struggle. Do we do more to rank better or stay were council is satisfied?
- It's a long application, takes a long time for those of us that are just one person. Don't want to see it completely change. That would be way worse. Some of the important things – for councils that have been there time after time, it seems redundant to always ask certain questions. Maybe better to ask if your board composition changed – rather than having to explain everything over and over like you're a new council. Eliminate some of the redundancy.
- Several grant cycles ago, review team had the opportunity to ask questions as they were ranking before it went to the board. Coordinators had the opportunity to respond to questions before review finalized.
- We may not love it but don't change it.
- Frustrates me – go through application, lot of time writing it, biggest frustration for two times now is that I spend about a month writing this application for council support but then I spend 2 months writing the final report. Takes time away from other things that I'm supposed to be doing. Streamline this process.

What are the two or three highest priorities for improving council support funding?

- Guaranteed funding base.
- Don't give up and don't give in. Don't give up on us and don't give in on helping us to improve.
- Outreach funds included with council support rather than included in a competitive process. Councils would be more effective in doing outreach if this was the case.
- Look at what it is that supports the council – obviously salary, but trainings to educate staff etc. Council support does not just mean coordinator salary – but keeping staff, making them better and creating awareness of council.

OPEN CONVERSATION

(watershed council representative comments/questions in italics; OWEB staff responses in regular text)

Why is there not the same level of review for SWCDs?

Years ago, the legislature actually put in a budget note that you had to provide a merit based council support system. Then OWEB adopted administrative rules for a merit-based council support system. There is no longer a legislative requirement, OWEB could change its rules. The SWCDs have a different system – the Oregon Department of Agriculture requires submittal of a work plan and quarterly reports. If the quarterly report doesn't show progress or success then they don't get their money. Council support grants require a report once a biennium and they have to submit a work plan.

Regarding your council support application and concerns about how you were evaluated by reviewers – communication is critical. OWEB has a team of reviewers from around the state, they are familiar with councils and many are return reviewers. In our application and training of reviewers, we tell reviewers to look at councils in the context of their local circumstances rather than compare them with each other. We do need to try hard to accurately capture the reviewers' evaluation so it is most useful to councils. We applaud the fact that you work with the SWCD so that we know our dollars are getting stretched as much as they can. You're not dinged because of this.

Do the reviewers have the opportunity to ask the councils questions before they submit their final review to the board?

No, not in this last round. We tried it out 4 years ago. It's a valid question – something we need to look at. There were mixed reviews of this approach, and it adds time to the review process.

How was the State of Oregon divided into the regions? We don't have issues similar with the basin that we are thrown into.

Historically we had 5 regions and then parts of regions 4 and 5 got put into region 6 to address workload issues. We needed to be more equitable in terms of travel time and number of projects. The original 5 regions were based on staffing from the Oregon Watershed Health days.

When you receive grant applications – do you look at it regionally and divide up appropriately or is it always the same for each region?

Project applications in each region are reviewed and ranked. Then we look at the available funding that we have and look at the projects and the rank that they were recommended to determine how many get funded. It is important to fund everywhere around the state – we try to stay within the ballpark but funding is not exactly the same for each region. When you get to the projects at the bottom line of how much funding is available, we look at how urgent the project is, i.e. will other match funds go away, is this a now or never project?.

LISTENING SESSION #6

Date: March 4, 2010
Location: LaGrande, Oregon; Union County Extension Services
Attendees: Representatives of 6 watershed council representatives, Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, OWEB board members and staff

Tom Byler, OWEB Director, provided opening comments similar to those reported above for the Hillsboro session.

What does it take for you to be successful? How do you know if you're successful?

- Accomplishing the goals that you set. Setting goals according to the priorities of the watershed. Having something that can be seen and measured.
- Seeing an ecological change / benefit on the ground.

- When people are coming to you with projects and wanting to get projects done.
- People know who you are – feeling connected to the community.
- Depends on your environment – success appears differently in different areas.
- Even with a diverse board being able to move forward on a project – coming to agreement.
- Finding a ranking of projects – types of projects.
- Types of partnerships that you have – public and private entities.
- OWEB funding is essential to success.

How can OWEB help you be a successful watershed council?

- Of course funding – we're spending a lot of time looking for funding when that time could be better spent elsewhere.
- More staff.
- Full funding for the one position there is – do not need more staff.
- General money in budget – general education budget.
- Would like to see more technical workshops. Does not have to be OWEB workshops but they could let us know of workshops going on around the state. You can always learn more. Three engineers gave three options for the same project with no similarities – with technical knowledge you would be able to know which direction to go.
- Money split up in such a way that non-capital things i.e. education in the schools would have some sort of guaranteed funding.
- Outreach funds should be included in council support – part of criteria to be evaluated in the council support but have to get funding elsewhere.
- You cannot effectively run an office without at least two staff – an office person and a field person.
- Streamlined administrative and reporting stuff to be able to spend more time working with community and doing projects. Reduction in time spent on these activities. Electronic setup for doing grant proposals – could create some efficiency for us and OWEB staff as well.

Are there specific services that OWEB could provide that would improve your efficiency, e.g. shared services?

- Add an attorney to the list of shared services.
- Health insurance – if we could have a group health insurance that would be great.
- Vehicles / transportation. As a 501c3, you cannot lease from the state motor pool.
- Auditor.
- Besides fiscal office stuff, we could really use technical consultants i.e. engineers, hydrologists, wetland specialists, mitigation specialists.
- State has mitigation funds for highways, help tuning into that would be beneficial. Technical assistance.
- For several years, NRCS engineers have done our technical stuff – having more and more problems with them not wanting to deal with it. If you need to have something engineered we are extremely hard pressed to get engineering done – have three or four projects that we are unable to complete because they do not have an engineer and cannot afford to hire an engineering consultant.
- OWEB has created interesting dynamic – sense of empowerment granted to locals to do projects / activities in their local watershed. Whole new culture of regulation –

oversight vs. interference. For people like us whose objective is to go out and restore habitat for listed species, it has become more complex for us to do restoration than for a big box store to come in and get permits. Governor's office is not getting it – salmon/steelhead areas being hamstrung by one agency. OWEB needs to step up to the plate here more. Need to make the case for us regarding restoration projects – there is a different between development and restoration. Seems to be a more difficult road for restoration. OWEB should play a role in permit streamlining and running interference.

- Delays that we struggle with in getting project through permitting. So few staff to review these permits. Restoration projects are increasing their workload. Creates issues with funding. Statewide exclusions for certain types of activities. Would reduce burden to us for getting through the process and the burden for the permitter as well.

What level of council support funding is needed to sustain your business?

- Why do some get more funding then others? At what point do you get to move up to more staff.
- Confusing as to why certain councils get so much more than another. Three different umbrella councils here in the room today and we all get different funding.
- With a half- time employee how can you expect to move up in the merit level. Hard to build sustainability in this process.
- There should be a guaranteed base of funding. Having an employee with lack of funding – you're never going to get anywhere.
- As long as the level is not the same for everybody. You can't give same funding to a 2000-acre watershed council as you would to a 1 million acre watershed council.
- Speaking to the merit part of it – why do we have to compete with each other.
- At least enough funding to cover a full time employee and office costs – paper, ink, replacement printer etc.

Should OWEB board limit the number of councils given the limited available funding? Is there some point at which you cap the number of councils?

- Are the councils producing and doing what they were asked to do. If they are, then no you don't eliminate them. But don't penalize those councils that have their hands tied due to lack of funding – could do more if they were even partially more funded.
- Maybe set up councils regionally – for the smaller watersheds.
- Maybe cap the amount that each council could get.
- Political fallout if a WC forms and then OWEB won't fund new councils.
- It's the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board – not the mostly OWEB. If there is a watershed that wants to form then you have to let them do that.
- Smaller watersheds that want to form should be encouraged to join in with other watersheds.

What can OWEB do to encourage partnerships?

- Not sure it needs to be encouraged – I'm pretty sure we are all doing it. We're forced into partnering.
- With the ESA recovery plans out there, someone is reminding the state agencies to contact the WCs. It seems like they are making these connections.
- There is a section in the application about this and we get points for it.

- Writing the OWEB grant really helps us design a project. By the time I have the grant figured out I can approach other people more professionally. Empowers me to go out and find more matching funding. Found this tremendously helpful. Also – if funded by OWEB you have more credibility.

Thoughts about having 1) guaranteed base of council support funding concept 2) competitive pool of funding – special initiative i.e. education, special projects etc. 3) toolbox of technical services – a pool of services that you could request. 4) pooled services i.e. group insurance?

- Looks reasonable. Pooled services – Network is looking into this.
- Like the toolbox of technical services, but they have to be dispersed throughout the State.
- Toolbox of technical services – few opportunities for those who are out here to get that type of work. If you have a statewide pool, then you'll be able to hire competent people from outside the region putting local folks out of work who have a lot of clout. Must be done in a way to not be alienating local people who have been the depended upon.
- We wouldn't be interested in the toolbox, but we would be interested in the pooled services – i.e. group insurance. Guaranteed base level of funding for councils with some kind of incentive package – I could see a lot of merit to it.
- Guaranteed base is important – knowing that you would at least have it and then apply for more. Toolbox and pooled services would be really beneficial as well.
- This could create spreading the money too thin so that you're back in the same boat that you were before.

Thoughts about an RFP process where funding is targeted to respond to restoration priorities?

- Interesting idea but takes some of the local control away, which is at the heart of what we do.
- Priorities differ. OWEB's priorities could vary from WCs and the landowners.
- How would you establish the selection criteria? Based on recovery planning? Would be a challenge. Some people up high think that once we have a list of priorities you should just work from the top down. We'd like to do this, but really challenging with landowners to do so.
- Recovery planning and competitive RFPs – Mid Columbia Recovery Planning – hiring an implementation coordinator to help. OWEB process already serves this role; I wish ODFW would instead hire a state fish biologist as that position hasn't been filled.
- It will prioritize the money in areas where you can't get work.
- My concern is that something like that would encourage or embed the practice of chasing funds rather than strategically developing project plans.
- Didn't OWEB do some sort of prioritization with each watershed. Basin restoration priorities. Priorities are not only based upon the watershed health but the landowners too.

Application process – how well is it working?

- When it's application time, my coordinator doesn't have time to do anything else. There is no way that we can make any request of the coordinator.
- Feedback doesn't help me that much. Reviews are fairly subjective. If they were more objective I could learn what it is that I'm being graded on and how.
- Felt comments were very helpful, but it goes in cycles.

- Seems like there is a lot of emphasis right now that you have continually updated strategic plans. But if I have a landowner that comes forward after years and is ready to do the restoration project then that becomes my priority.
- Less repetition now then has been in the past. Maybe yes/no questions or multiple choice would help streamline.
- Do wonder about multi-year projects and if you're getting credit on the application.
- Strategic planning is way over-rated in this application process. Opportunity is more valuable then strategy.
- We got penalized for lack of daily supervision by our board members – they hired me to run, staff and program and do not want to do hand holding. Nobody that sits on an evaluation committee can make that determination that the board is not providing proper supervision and oversight.
- Struggle with the budget, reflecting council support of OWEB. A lot of other projects that contribute to salary costs and overhead.
- Overly subjective – few cycles ago, two watersheds were in similar situation we wrote basically the same applications and got two completely different results.
- Reviewers should be on a regional level so they have some familiarity.
- I thought it was great. Good comments, something to work towards and set goals around and be able to achieve.
- How reviewers arrived at the final result is not transparent.
- There is a perception out there from our board members and people that we work with that more emphasis is put on the western side of the state and more emphasis deal with fish issues. See everything leaning the other direction and us kind of like the step child. Council support reflects this. If we did something on a regional standpoint – i.e. regional review team, they would understand what we have to deal with – our issues are totally different than the western side of the state.
- Had opportunity to interact with the review team before. Was valuable. It wasn't enough to give somebody a clear picture of what was going on if they didn't have that already.
- Don't change the grant application much. Give us a couple shots with this one.

<u>What are the two or three highest priorities in terms of improvements of the funding program?</u>

- Essentially keep all bureaucratic processes as short and easy as possible.
- Fund at least one staff person full time.
- What would be in the guaranteed base? (Would like general funds for outreach, education; coordinator salary.) Would it have the same basic categories that you have now in the council support? If you're going to eliminate some of that then don't touch it – we can't do with less than what is there now. Don't reduce what's currently funded now.
- Fiscal manager stated that a 30-40 day wait on payment is tough to handle. Doesn't like 10% withholding but I understand why it has to be there.
- Council member is concerned about matching requirement on restoration projects – portion of match qualification prior to grant should be.

OPEN CONVERSATION
(Watershed council representative comments/questions in italics; OWEB staff responses in regular text)

Could you look at previous applications/reviews when reviewing the current application? I know it's our job to include in the application but would make it easier for review team to judge against the individual council rather than against each other.

OWEB funds the CREP technicians but gave funding to ODA. Why?

OWEB is in partnership with the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Prograwm (CREP) because of the strong ties ODA has with SWCDs and NRCS. Most of the CREP money is federal. OWEB has been approached by the Oregon Association of Conservation Distrcits and districts to help support technical assistance for CREP that is important to successful projects.

When OWEB receives/approves an application, before you write the agreement are you able to define where the money comes from? Are you able to sway it? Have a water quality project funded by DEQ and OWEB. Got in trouble by DEQ because we found out that OWEB funding had federal funds in it and DEQ couldn't consider it match funds.

Capital will always be state money, non-capital will be both state and federal.
Restoration and acquisition projects are funded with capital money, always the bigger pot.
Monitoring, assessment, outreach, education, technical assistance are funded with non-capital funds – a more limited pot of funding than capital, and most of the non-capital funding is federal, not state.

Acquisition is considered capital because it's stipulated so in the constitution.

OWEB and WCs have had effective symbiotic relationship for quite a while now – new player that will be valuable to both and that's the Network. Nobody else will make the commitment to serve on the board in our area so I have since it started. Capacity that the Network has been able to help develop within individual councils. To the degree that OWEB can be supportive of the Network it will be beneficial to all of us. Appreciate the cooperation that we have seen with staff and OWEB board.

The Network has been hugely valuable – without the Network councils would be looking at $4 million, and now we're looking at $5 million for watershed council support. The Network also helps councils collectively help each other. Love the model that councils provide in the community.

Mitigation – is there any way we could pressure some of these agencies to keep funding in the county where the work/project is being done? Even in the same state would be nice.

This is a huge issue right now. I can understand the perspective of keeping the funds where the development is occurring. Also if you're eliminating 20 acres of wetlands and there is no place to do restoration / mitigation in that region, then you should be able to move that mitigation elsewhere.

Wind Turbines and other development, I have projects that we could use those mitigation funds. Who do I talk to?

You need to talk with the individual agencies involved with the mitigation.

State and federal agencies need to understand how they can actually be partners. Some sort of programmatic delivery could be meaningful.

Need strong encouragement. While we don't have same communication and infrastructure as we did 7 – 8 years ago, it's impressive that the Oregon Plan has persevered.

OWEB Board member, Eric Quaempts, provided closing remarks. He has been impressed with efforts of staff. What he heard today about success is:

- Environmental change – only a few comments on this more on operational successes.
- Operational success – diversity, quality of participants etc. Important to have equitable administrative support across the councils i.e. health, 401k, issues surrounding IT, admin services.
- Improve consistency and clarity of review criteria and how reviewed.
- Mitigation criteria – how mitigation is being credited – you could have a role in this. Be careful that it doesn't take you away from your work functions.

APPENDIX E. COMPILATION OF SURVEY RESPONSES

In addition to comments received during the six Listening Sessions, Watershed Council representatives were given the opportunity to complete an online survey by March 12, 2010. Eighteen (18) online surveys were completed.

1. What does it mean to be a successful watershed council?

- A successful watershed council is one that makes substantial progress on achieving its mission. That mission may include goals for fish and wildlife habitat or water quality improvements, for public education, or for community involvement. It may include all of these.
- It means having habitat remediation projects underway at all times, at various locations in the watershed.
- A successful watershed council is one that finds a relevant space in their watershed. The community of stakeholders are able to define a vision for their watershed community and resources in a manner that speaks to, connects with and motivates landowners to action and participation in the Oregon Plan. The Council can create objectives and goals around the limiting factors that prevent the tipping point at which watershed health starts to improve that can be monitored for progress and feedback can be used to adjust their strategy to meet changing conditions and landscapes.
- A successful WSC is one that works with a diverse group of stakeholders to establish a clear mission, set goals and objectives, and then implement projects and programs to meet these. As part of this, a successful WSC must measure its progress toward these goals and objectives.
- That needs to be defined by each council. It is like defining personal success. What is "successful" for one person is not for another. Success generally could be defined as meeting goals and objectives related to the council's mission.
- To be respectful for the needs of ALL peoples: Industrial, agriculture, commercial, residential segments in fulfilling the 'Watershed Mission Statement.
- Community awareness and support of watershed issues; strong educational presence in local schools; active and meaningful projects; anticipation and preparedness for up-coming political, social, and environmental issues and their consequences to the watershed
- To bring various, diverse parts of the community together to create positive results for the watershed
- Create better informed citizens and complete on the ground projects that promote the survival of all species.
- To be a self perpetuating group- have financial footing, active membership, presence in the community and providing successful and effective restoration projects
- A council must maintain the ability to do assessments, restoration and protection of their watersheds while engaging stakeholders, the general public and related agencies
- Result in actual change to environmental functions
- To enhance and facilitate watershed residents' desire to restore watershed function, through education, outreach and site-specific restoration projects.
- It means to actively engage your community and people of the watershed in activities that benefit watershed health.

- It means something entirely different according to the geographical and demographic conditions under which the WC is trying to conduct a successful program.
- A successful watershed council engages with the people in its area to promote watershed health in a cost-effective manner. This can be through education or on-the-ground restoration/enhancement projects.
- Successful councils are able to identify and implement projects that are meaningful in their community and improve the health of the watershed (and whatever critical resources are identified). This will be different depending on the nature of the need in the watershed. Some councils provide a project focus and some councils provide an education focus. Councils still need to bring together stakeholder, but this can be done in a lot of creative ways other than just having folks attend meetings.

a. What does it take financially to be successful?

- To be financially successful, a council must undertake projects and/or activities that advance its mission while maintaining its budget.
- A coordinator and a board member or two who are great grant writers, and who know people at federal agencies.
- If funding is tight, flexibility in applying the funding to the needs that are barriers to restoration happening.
- Two things: 1) Fiscal management and governance that meets Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP). This ensures credibility and accountability. 2) Stable, long-term funding that allows the WSC to function effectively.
- Depends on the definition of success. Some things cost more (dam removal) some things cost less (networking). Generally I would say a council needs to be able to pay a comparable wage to keep staff competent and retained. Competent staff are critical to meet council criteria for "successful".
- To plan the each 'Budget' year with a road map/program plan representing sound financial practice and be ethically accountable to adhere to accomplishing goals/objectives.
- Support for projects, especially in the assessment and design phases support for the coordinator, to leave more time for planning, coordination, and seeking additional grant funding a history of successful community involvement and significant project completion
- Enough money to pay a coordinator to help develop projects and seek support through grants and community support to complete beneficial projects.
- A mix of funding sources is important. OWEB council support is at the base. Without good general support we cannot write the grants to accomplish on the ground projects and do the outreach and education that help people do the right thing.
- Not sure since were not there yet!!! It would be good to have some more direction as to how to become financially secure and what sort of insurance you need and all those 'boring' but important details
- Councils must have sufficient funding for a coordinator or staff person that is attractive for recruitment and retention. Councils must also have the capacity to write successful grants and manage projects on a budget.
- Enough money to fund a coordinator full time.
- Financially, it is important to have sufficient funds not only for specific projects, but to conduct all of the pre-project planning and conduct partner and landowner meetings as

projects and restoration policy are being developed. It is also important to have sufficient funds to cover true overhead costs -- occupancy, furnishings, supplies, equipment, insurance, etc. Council support funds are vital to cover flexible staff time, and can also be applied to some of the minimal core overhead costs. Ideally, any successful Council has a diversity of funding sources. In order to accomplish that goal, it takes a higher level of audit and better communications materials, both of which have associated costs which are difficult to cover with OWEB funds.

- Funding for staff and projects
- Minimal funds to support the personnel and office expenses are essential. Funding for specific projects can be from OWEB or other funding sources.
- It takes a variety of different funding sources that allow you to cover organizational costs, staff costs, and project costs. It is also important to have a cash reserve to accommodate the wait time that often comes with grant reimbursement requests. Success is also indicated by having a sufficient number of staff (or shared staff with other organizations) to get the work done without leading to staff burnout. Some councils can handle having one staff, but two or three helps to distribute the work load so that one person does not have to be all things for all people.

b. What do you need/desire from OWEB to help you be a success?

- A steady level of funding! (Good luck with that one in our state)! Cogent rules on substance abuse, sexual harassment, and the other logistics, so that there is not duplication with every single watershed organization. Help becoming a 501c3.
- It would be ideal to have a relationship with OWEB that is more partnership like in this endeavor to make the Oregon Plan and watershed restoration happen on the ground. The relationship still feels parent/child at times (especially on the fiscal side) and it undermines a great opportunity for collaboration. It would be nice for OWEB to understand that Councils are just as or more under-staffed than OWEB. I recognize they are trying their best to run a complicated and large grant program on limited resources, and would like a return understanding that we are juggling a large number of balls in the air while trying to implement various projects and programs that meet watershed health objectives (e.g. design, permits, landowner outreach, funding etc). Most Councils are not intentionally trying to get out of reporting on fiscal correctly or final reports. Most Councils have one FTE or less with a rather steep learning curve, and one person trying to get projects on the ground while also running an office. OWEB makes mistakes and so will Councils given this impossible amount of work for one staff. The point is Councils need OWEB and OWEB needs Councils to be able to report those great restoration results that provide the data to keep OWEB in existence. Some mutual understanding of challenges would be greatly appreciated. And if we move to a more collaborative partnership approach to our granting relationship, together Councils and OWEB are more likely to come up with solutions that make all our work easier.
- Three things: 1) Council Support funding that is efficient (i.e., not long, tedious, overbearing applications and processing) and predictable. 2) Grant programs that efficiently deliver funding to projects/programs with a minimal amount of unnecessary administration. 3) A philosophy that focuses on outcomes....not bureaucratic process.
- Continued full and vocal support of the diverse councils who work to make the Oregon Plan happen; reduce bureaucracy and administrative work that takes away from

"getting things done"; streamlining all OWEB processes and information (OGMS is a great step).

- To be respective to the financial needs of the smaller WC's and assisting in fostering growth in working toward their growth objectives.
- Financial support; fewer bureaucratic requirements to free up time for meaningful work, for example frequent and redundant financial reporting; increasingly complex grant applications and reporting ; and excessive requirements (reporting and otherwise) for council members.
- A fair playing field for support grants. The entire process is so opaque and constantly changing that I have no trust that OWEB is fair to all participants.
- Money, seminars, help with networking and information sharing to understand what works and doesn't work.
- it seems like some of the building processes should be established already from other councils that have already gone through new stage- I know OWEB tries to make it a community based organization but it seems like there could be some more structure on the building of a watershed council...
- I would ideally like to see enhanced and stable funding for council staff and projects
- Continuation of council support funding.
- Flexible funding streams that acknowledge the scope and pace of the community process required to do meaningful education, outreach and restoration work. Ready access to content and process information, in reports, website and workshops. Core funding to sustain the minimal staff and capacity presence to get a functional Council up and running -- ideally enough for one full-time position, at a minimum.
- OWEB needs to better understand the differences between each and every watershed/watershed council throughout the state.
- State perspective on watershed planning and action, i.e. an integrated approach.
- All we need from OWEB is some level of council support funding. Project funding is great but there are other sources for that.
- Reliable, reasonably predictable funding would be a big help. It would nice to be able to count on a certain level of funds and then be able to compete for additional funds. It would also be helpful to reduce the level of paperwork required for grant applications (although the council support app is much better than previous iterations) and financial reporting. There is a lot of money wasted on our end and on OWEB's end chasing down small receipts. It seems that the level of scrutiny increases on a regular basis. OWEB grants require much more administrative time than any of the other grant we manage (including several federal funding sources). It takes away from our ability to work with the community when we are spending significant numbers of hours trying to make sure we have our paperwork correct.

c. If OWEB funding disappeared tomorrow, what would be the consequences?

- All remediation work comes largely to a halt about 3 mos. after the last input of OWEB funding. (I.e., we have a small cushion, not a huge one). Education at local events could continue to take place with our stream and watershed simulators, though. Some volunteers might continue to meet and take on carcass seeding in local streams. Invasive weeds would mount a comeback; landowners would have to turn to other agencies to help with streambank stabilization. A couple of grants would be left uncompleted.

- Most Councils would probably dissolve and we, as a state, would not meet the vision described in the Oregon Plan. We would also see a major decrease in voluntary restoration efforts by landowners and would need to rely more heavily on regulation to protect our resources. However, I don't think you would see a trajectory to improving conditions as we do now but rather maintenance of the status quo if our regulatory agencies even have capacity to maintain it.
- Most WC's would disappear very quickly. My specific WSC would shrink by about 70% and struggle just to remain afloat.
- Probably 95% of councils (including ours) would be gone within one year, the rest would struggle on, a few would survive or change.
- The alternative would represent additional financial assistance through outside foundation grant sources. Also, the lack of OWEB funds would hopeful foster more WC local community financial assistance and 'In-Kind support, e.g. volunteering through networking with local service groups- Rotary, Lions clubs, church groups, schools, individual families ,etc.
- Fewer projects, less outreach, decreased awareness of watershed issues
- Our watershed council would close and projects would cease to happen. The streams would deteriorate
- YIKES!!!!!! It would shut down. We have uncommitted emergency funds to operate for a month or so. Even if we could find volunteers to do some of the work, OWEB pays most of the phone bill, the copier lease, office space fees, the internet connection, etc. We simply would not have a place to live or the ability to communicate.
- Our council would probably fold-we are new(~3years receiving OWEB funds) and the difference between having funds from OWEB from before(we were a council for about 3 years before OWEB funds) is that we have progressed in 1 year what took us 2.5 years as an all volunteer council.
- We would immediately lose our staff and capacity to make significant assessments, protection and restoration efforts. We would also lack any capacity to consider land purchases, trades or significant projects. We would be entirely volunteer operated and be able to have a few meetings, plant a few trees, advocate for watershed health and pick up trash
- Coordinator position would be curtailed.
- Our capacity to help landowners understand watershed function in an experiential way, and to improve stewardship of lands and waters, would virtually disappear. If Council support were to be discontinued, we could still put the occasional project on the ground, but the probability of those projects adding up to any real ecological uplift would be very low, as they would be too few, too geographically dispersed, and not working synergistically in time.
- I believe watershed improvement projects would stop by at least 50%. Watershed Council staffing would decrease.
- Oregon Plan Gone
- I t would be a problem but our watershed council has never been supported by OWEB and we have operated very successfully for over twelve years.
- Most councils would have to make some hard choices about the future of their existence. It becomes harder and harder to get dollars for basic operational support. We can not live on project dollars alone and it takes a lot of time to build up a donor base (which only works in areas with enough population). I would predict that at least 2/3 of

councils would cease to exist after a few years. Some of the higher profile groups would survive and others might be able to share resources or work with an SWCD with a tax base.

2. Are we accomplishing what we need to with the available funding?

- YES! Definitely YES.
- No. Now we have a funding program that rewards promises and 100% success rate (which is not possible). If we really want to understand our impact with this funding, we need a funding approach that allows space to learn and monitor. For example, instead of a council support grant application in which we submit a new accomplishments/work plan section each biennium that does not connect with the previous biennium to monitor whether promises are met; an application in which Councils define benchmarks to meet a certain objective and then a reporting space on progress would allow reviewers and OWEB to see if Councils really are moving down a path that makes sense. There could be room for Councils to adjust those benchmarks as new information is available about their watersheds. By building a work plan for a longer term with benchmarks we could be helping council build a strategy and make the council support process a tool. Benchmarks can be as simple as recruit the landowners in the next year and start plantings in year two. Or re-create by-laws to address internal problems. This set up might give councils a change to get credit for things that take a lot of work that currently is not given in the council support evaluation. On a more specific level, we need more capacity with technical assistance, education, and so one, which is critical for moving a project to completion (but I think this is well understood).
- Yes. In general, WC's and other recipients do a very good job of being strategic, focused and effective.
- OWEB needs to keep separate (in their minds and in their funding practices) the different scale of work done in the name of the OR Plan and recognize the importance of all scales and types of work/impact its money goes to create. Is multi million dam removal intrinsically worth more than outreach to 1000 residents? There is glory in the big money, large scale projects but the important work of reaching the minds or Oregonians is just as critical, if not glamorous.
- Depending on the individual WC goals/objectives (Projects) and priorities, the funding will vary. While the available funding provides necessary assistance, in some cases...the larger priority programs, requiring available funding, will fall short of fulfilling the total project goals.
- Yes
- I have no way of knowing other than in our watershed. I know we have more projects we could do, but lack time and resources.
- I think it works fairly well. I'd like to see some research funding on the local level but I can understand why that isn't a priority.
- I think so? Unknown.
- A qualified yes.
- I think we are doing a good job under current funding.
- I think that OWEB Council support as it is presently structured keeps some Councils limping along, and rewards those that are already thriving. I cannot speak to overall OWEB accomplishments, as I am too new to the system. I believe that the modus

operandi of our Council is accomplishing what we need to under the Oregon Plan in our watershed, but we still have insufficient funds for community and K-12 education.

- For the most part, yes.
- I think it is time for OWEB to answer this question and provide more information on what needs to be accomplished from a state perspective. OWEB needs staff that will be very knowledgeable within 3 basic regions: 1) Salmon - west; 2) Salmon - east; and 3) No salmon. There is really a dearth of knowledge concerning what OWEB is expecting to accomplish in each of the three categories of watershed basins.
- Full or nearly full council support funding for watersheds that do little in the way of projects and education is a waste of public resources. Council support funding levels should be based on the effectiveness of each council.
- We are accomplishing an amazing amount with limited resources, but is has a price. Coordinators and other council staff are generally significantly underpaid for their level of expertise. We do this job because we love the work (hopefully), but burnout is high. We are asking councils to take on more and more responsibility without providing the support (like technical assistance funds) to do the job. We are getting it done anyway, but it is a constant struggle. The available funds keep us going, but aren't really sufficient. The responsibility is on the larger state level to adequately support natural resource agencies and not just rely on volunteer led efforts supported by lottery dollars to restore salmon and watersheds.

a. Are we addressing the priority needs in watersheds?

- This is a tough question. It seems that different entities have different priorities. Someone comes out with one study that says "focus here" and we do it. ODFW comes out with another study and we focus there.
- I think we have a good idea of what the needs are and are trying. The challenge in meeting those needs is that there are so many hoops to jump from permits to grantors. From the on-the-ground perspective, the most challenging and disheartening aspect of the job is that we are just trying to do good work with volunteers on very limited resources. We spend so much energy trying to get landowners from skeptical to believers, accrue donated materials to help with costs, apply for grants, etc. and then permitting agencies and grantors make it hard to just get the work done. Of source we need protocols and reporting to make sure we present a logical use of funding, but again, we are partners in this and it sometimes feels it should not be so hard to just get the work done.
- Yes. In general, WC's and other recipients do a very good job of being strategic, focused and effective.
- Mostly. Councils tend to grab onto the low hanging fruit, regardless of whether it is high priority. Sometimes work that is high priority is important because it is obvious it needs to be done, but there are obstacles to doing the work. I am thinking especially of significant fish barriers in our watershed that have so many obstacles (e.g. multiple and/or non-cooperative landowner/agencies; requiring professionally designed instream engineering which really has unknown/unpredictable consequences downstream) involved in removing them, it is almost impossible to get the barrier out and the priority need met.
- In my 7 seven year WC experience, the majority needs are addressed. But as noted above, the shortfall in funding may prevent the selection of lesser priority projects.

- Yes, although more emphasis should be placed on assessments and design, which may not be 'shovel-ready', but better ensure a successful and long-lasting project.
- I have no idea from your process. We think we do OK as far as we go, but I'm not sure OWEB contributes much other than financial support, which is critical.
- Yes.
- Yes- our area had little to no information in a comprehensive format- our priority was a watershed assessment- without OWEB funds it would not have been possible.
- Yes and thank you.
- Yes.
- I cannot speak for any other watersheds, but I believe we are addressing most of our priorities here at home. We do not have sufficient funds to meet educational priorities or policy issues.
- In most watersheds, yes. However I feel that recently OWEB has turned more towards salmon and steelhead related projects and there are some watersheds whose priorities do not involve that need. If they want to be a "Watershed" funding source they need to look a little closer and be more open to addressing individual needs of all watersheds and not limit funding to "fish" projects.
- It would be very helpful to us if OWEB could finish defining the priority needs for every basin.
- Not always. Often watershed activities are based on available funding rather than priorities.
- Yes and no. Council have gotten a lot more sophisticated about developing priorities and implementing priority projects. There is likely room for improvement with some councils, but many have evolved. We have moved away from being able to provide the community organization piece because we are so busy trying to get good projects done. So it depends on how you define priority. Do you mean ecological priorities or community priorities, or both? We are not able to do a good job on both without burning out staff and volunteers.

b. How can OWEB funding be better focused to meet those needs?

- Identify our areas of highest priority for remediation.
- I think I would just reiterate the answer above about applications with benchmarks.
- With only a few very minor edits to the rules that govern "fiscal administration" OWEB could allow grant recipients to use the 10% "fiscal administration" funding for "general administration" just like most other local, state and federal funders do. This would not cost OWEB any more...but recipients could make better use of the admin funding if it were not limited to the very narrowly defined uses of "fiscal administration." This would significantly increase WSC capacity with no net impact to the OWEB budget.
- Many councils do not have the expertise (meaning money, experience, and viewpoint) to analyze their watersheds and prioritize where they need to work and do the engineering required to make fixes. Some of the stumbling blocks with addressing priority needs lie in areas like permitting (confusing, contradictory, expensive) which may be beyond the scope of OWEB having any impact on regarding funding, but OWEB could recognize the additional costs and challenges involved in improving the capacity of councils to deal with these complex projects.
- To understand the needs of the smaller WC's and assisting in providing state wide networking assistance, especially in adjacent watershed areas.

- Increase in TA funding.
- I cannot tell how it is focused now, with apparently changing criteria and an opaque process for making decisions which sometimes don't seem based on the stated criteria.
- I'm not sure.
- Unknown.
- I ask if OWEB can internally use their funds in a leveraged fashion with other government and private funds.
- Current system is very good.
- I do not think OWEB can meet all needs, across the full spectrum.
- Maybe group watersheds throughout the state that have similar needs. If watersheds that had similar needs could compete against other watersheds with those same needs then I think it would help make the funding process a little more fair.
- Base project and outreach funding on developed priorities. Fully fund updating assessments and Plans so the priorities reflect current circumstances. Provide council support funding based on council effectiveness.
- We don't have a way to pay for grant development other than with council support which means that we don't have as much time for community outreach unless we have a specific program with some funding attached. As grants become more challenging to write we have to spend a lot more time on them which means that we have even less time to involve the community. Our dedicated volunteers are also dropping out because they have put in a good number of years and are ready to do something else. New folks step up, but there is a limited pool of people in small communities. OWEB would help us by simplifying the grant process, and perhaps being able to direct funds to what a group really needs to function. It would be nice to actually have funds to re-visit our assessment and be able to get technical help for complex projects without having to go through multiple funding cycles to get the funds (or not have access to them at all). I know that the capital/ non capital restrictions are challenging. Perhaps the new ballot measure will open things up a bit (and hopefully not make it worse).

3. What should OWEB do to help build watershed council capacity?

- I don't see that as a job they can, or should do well. This is best done at the local level.
- I think the biggest capacity problem right now is the concern over liability for council members. It is costing OWEB more than they think. Not only are councils going out and buying individual general liability insurance (which typically comes from OWEB council support), but they are hiring engineers to design and oversee large wood placements and other projects that might not need an engineer. But by having one, there is some protection there. The cost of projects keeps getting higher as well. There is a statute that protects landowners doing restoration, but legal advice to councils has been that it doesn't clearly protect councils (until it is tested). It would be great to have something like this for councils, but they don't know how to make this happen on their own.
- Please see answer to Question #2b. In addition, OWEB should look at capacity from two sides: 1) funding, and 2) what WC's must do. If funding cannot be increased, then OWEB should look at how to decrease the level of administrative work necessary for WCs to administer OWEB grants. OWEB grants require more administrative work than grants from virtually every other funder, including DEQ, ODFW, USFS, USFWS, EPA, etc. A reduction in the administrative requirements would free up more capacity for WC's to focus on "real" deliverables in watershed restoration.

- Support the work of NOWC. Continue to make the importance of council capacity an element at OWEB Biennial Conference. Help councils from Salem and in the local watersheds by being a presence and representing OWEB and watershed councils as working as one body to achieve the OR Plan. OWEB as an agency has very little exposure to the public; most Oregonians do not know what OWEB is or what it does or what the connection between watershed councils and OWEB is. The understanding of these issues and connections will be even more important given the upcoming renewal measure on the ballot. The more the public understands these issues, the stronger councils can be within their own communities by gaining public support and involvement.
- I do not understand this question?
- Stop requiring regulated processes for councils such as self-evaluations, formalized work plans... our councils are volunteers and very impatient with this process. They would prefer to devise their own work and reporting processes to report success/progress to OWEB for accountability purposes.
- Provide consistent funding, with some certainty and fairness.
- Not sure.
- More guidelines or outlines as to how to go about to build watershed capacity-maybe it is available but I am not familiar with it-maybe that is the issue.
- Regular communication and local presence with the councils is always advised.
- Continue council support.
- Adequately fund the underfunded Councils for at least 2 years (one cycle). Defund if they cannot get on their feet in that time. Allocate Council support in block funds.
- What do they consider council capacity? Some watersheds have thousands of people living in that watershed while others have only hundreds at the most. They need cannot ask for the capacity to be the same in every watershed...it's just not feasible. Look at what projects are being done, how much on the ground work is completed every year, etc. Sometimes councils with fewer people get just as much or more work done than those with many members.
- Provide assessment and support funding. Provide on-site effectiveness training to coordinators. Reduce paperwork requirements. Much of the paperwork that is required of councils currently could be done by OWEB staff using already submitted information. Continue to develop interactive spreadsheets within applications.
- Provide us with flexible operational support that doesn't come with such a paperwork requirement. It would be nice to spend funds on what we need without having the document every penny. Some councils may need to put all their funds into the coordinators salary, some may need to be able to pay the rent and utilities. I think that councils are doing a lot to increase their own capacity. We are hindered by the paperwork burden. I'd also like to see a change in how councils are rated on merit. Giving more money to councils that are doing well means that they are more likely to continue to do well, while the struggling councils continue to struggle. If we even the playing field and then provide an opportunity for councils to apply for additional funds for what they really need then we might be able to really improve council capacity.

a. Should OWEB limit the number of councils that it funds to order to provide more adequate levels of funding to councils?

- Yes.

- Yes.
- Yes. The number should be capped where it currently is.
- Councils should be able to prove their capacity and potential before they are funded for the first time. It should not be easy to get funded for the first time. That challenge of "proving up" will self select those who won't be successful. Those existing councils who are struggling need to be mentored and given special help (which I believe OWEB is working on) to get them back on their feet to be productive.
- Yes...something to review and consider.
- That should definitely be considered.
- I don't know what the demands are funds.
- I'm not sure what the question is. OWEB should not fund a new council for the west fork of the north branch of upper fish creek and maybe should try to combine small councils if they exist in some areas, but limiting the number to 50 just means that next year to save money it will be 45.
- Interesting concept-although since our council is quite small and the nearest geographically councils are huge (and been in existence for 10+years) I think we would feel swallowed up by them if we were to join them. Would the bigger councils be sensitive to a smaller need-would our area be expected to participate in council that has different structures, bylaws, etc how would that morph into one being? Seems like you would spend quite a bit of time trying to figure out how to mesh together-which may or may not be a good experience.
- Only if the state's significant watersheds have a council operating.
- No, money should go to top rated applications.
- Yes, but only after giving all councils a chance to come up to par in this next round of funding.
- Maybe, but they need come up with a very fair way to do so. I think that if a council is not accomplishing any goals, then yes they should not receive funding. But there are also councils out there that have projects lined up and people willing to participate but are not receiving funding to do so.
- Definitely not. Our watershed council is effective primarily because the people of our community feel connected to it. Operating more regional council may save some money but will reduce OWEBs overall ability to accomplish its mission. Its mission is to promote watershed health, not operate as cheaply as possible.
- OWEB should set limits on funding new councils. They have to cover an area that is not currently represented and meet criteria for either population size or watershed size. They also have to demonstrate that there is a real gap in need in a area (no other group that could do the work- either council or SWCD).

b. What support is needed to make umbrella councils more effective?

- Limit their size to maximize funding at the local level. How do you feel about the Oregon Dept. of Education?
- Don't know much about how umbrella councils work.
- No answer to this question.
- Perhaps the question should be more focused on determining social, political, and geographic boundaries for effectiveness.
- I don't know how umbrella councils operate, since ours disbanded and with two councils sharing a coordinator, we do not meet the umbrella definition.

- I don't know anything about this.
- Unknown even what umbrella council is...
- Regular visits with the council boards would be helpful.
- NA.
- I do not have experience in this arena, but I believe it probably takes the right leadership in the umbrella position.
- OWEB has encouraged councils to make up an umbrella council but there are cases where councils do so and then OWEB does not fund them as an umbrella council. They need to make the guidelines very clear as to what an umbrella council entails and look at each umbrella council individually to decide if they are in fact an umbrella council.
- Not really familiar with their needs
- Umbrella councils either work or they don't. Umbrella council funding is not sufficient to keep groups from splitting.

c. Are there functions where contracted services or technical assistance would help build watershed council capacity?

- Yes. We lean on our engineers and riparian contractors often, when we need greater expertise than our coordinator can provide.
- Not if it means taking from the council support pot of money.
- No. In most cases, WC's have so few staff that the core staff need to be built/sustained before the use of outside contractors can really be useful. Contractors need to be managed by staff so the core staff needs to be strong first.
- Yes, in providing strategic planning, conflict resolution, policy and procedure development, fiscal management (setting up systems, auditing), marketing, and much more.
- Yes...this would depend on what the key priority programs would gain from the above assistance (contracted/technical services).
- Perhaps in researching and writing grants.
- Yes - to help determine project feasibility.
- Do you mean things like project design?
- yes- I was wondering if the smaller councils could 'piggy back' services such as insurance and paperwork needs to the larger councils that have capacity to do those things-such as paying the admin fees to council X for our paperwork, etc. One of our council's big issues is that we currently use the SWCD as our insurance 501 3c status, because we don't want to get into the issue of liability, employment rules as we are worried about legal stuff.
- We use both regularly now but typically for projects. Our council benefitted from contracting to create a strategic plan.
- Yes.
- Insurance pools, regional payroll services/contracts. I would not want to go too far afield, since our local business is part of what makes us a welcome part of the community.
- Yes. Most watershed councils do not have the internal capacity to design and follow through with all the projects needed in their area.
- It would be very helpful to have engineering help to develop project designs and budgets. We often have to ask folks to do work pro bono to do this for grant

development. It might also be helpful to have contracted services to help develop or improve accounting systems.

d. Should there be incentives for establishing and maintaining effective partnerships?

- A good council won't need any incentives; it will already be happening.
- Yes, but you have to be careful about how this is presented. How is OWEB and reviewers going to know from the application that the partnerships are active and not just in name to get an incentive?
- Not directly. WCs should be judged based on their effectiveness and efficiency at achieving outcomes....not on counting partnerships. In most cases, partnerships are necessary to be effective and efficient (in the same way that good fiscal management, talented staff, strong Boards, etc. are necessary for any organization to be effective). But, in some cases, partnerships may not be as important for overall effectiveness. Given that one size does not fit all and that the OUTCOMES are what should be judged, OWEB should keep focused on the outcomes, not on measuring the individual partnerships.
- Effective partnerships should be recognized and given weight in council support applications. Maybe in the application, each council needs to talk about their partners and the mutually beneficial gains of the relationship. Networking may seem amorphous, but it is critical to gaining support and hence, capacity for councils.
- Yes...we are a competitive society and incentives represent are similar to achieving goals and objectives and fulfillment thereof.
- Absolutely.
- Yes.
- Partnerships are generally good. I guess it depends on the incentive. I'm not sure it is too good of an idea for OWEB to get too involved in monitoring and promoting partnerships. Some watershed councils don't get along with their local soil and waters conservation districts. Cutting down funding is not the answer.
- Of course.
- Yes.
- Not beyond what's current.
- Not specifically. I think there should be block Council support grants, perhaps with the opportunity to apply at any time of the year for small sums (<10k) for extra Council support for special partnership projects (e.g., participating in an ESA process, helping to design a local TMDL riparian planting strategy, developing a municipal watershed management plan for a drinking water source).
- Yes, that might help in the decision of weather or not to limit the number of councils it is going to fund. I think partnerships are very important to watershed councils and the work they do.
- Yes. But not to the point that it becomes difficult for councils to work independently.
- All councils have to develop partnerships or else we don't get grants. Some councils have better community partnership options than others. It would be helpful to offer some creative opportunities for funding, but don't make it detrimental to councils that come from poor or indifferent communities that struggle to find other groups that are willing and able to work with them.

4. How can OWEB make more effective use of the limited funding that is available?

- By maximizing funding to local watershed councils.
- Please see answer to Question 2b. The administrative rules are severely limiting the degree to which OWEB can be effective with the limited funds that it has because of the narrow definition of "fiscal administration." If the 10% were to become "general administration", WC's and other recipients could use this to help support organizational capacity, thus increasing the benefit of OWEB funding without increasing the total amount of OWEB funding. This would also decrease the funding pressure on the very limited Council Support program.
- Have rigorous examination of how and if funds are being used effectively. Otherwise, I think most funds are being used effectively. Work done with OWEB funds are spare and I would say there is little to trim.
- To recognize and reward those WC's with funding on key priority programs that have higher importance rating to the overall statewide program goals. This would especially be true if the programs are interrelated with adjacent WC's and even statewide programs. And above all...'Fairness to All.'
- Reduce overhead
- Simplify the funding process so that it takes fewer resources.
- Maintain a lean and efficient staffing system in Salem, and get as many resources to councils as possible. Limit overhead and reporting requirements made of councils. Concentrate on environmental outcomes, and limit monitoring, reporting, etc.
- Unsure. I don't know how much OWEB spends on admin versus grants.
- Work at the level of HUC 4. Use the umbrella designation to reach down to the HUC 5. Define a sub-umbrella designation to apply strategic projects to HUC 6 levels.
- Provide council support funding based on council effectiveness. Reduce administrative requirements as much as possible. Provide technical and administrative support to assist council accomplish their goals.*
- The hardest thing now is to get basic operational support (over head) and staff dollars that aren't covered by projects. This should continue to be a priority for funding. The next priority would be for education, technical assistance, and planning dollars. There are quite a few sources that offer project dollars.

a. Is there a better model that should be explored? Examples: Regional basis, flat funding, RFPs issued by OWEB to address defined restoration priorities, more funding for areas with ESA compliance issues.

- Unknown, although I do like the idea RE: ESA.
- I think councils could use ESA compliance and restoration priorities to guide a strategy with benchmarks that would become the template for reporting each biennium in our council support grants.
- I think the existing model works well - i.e., that WC's are ranked on a scale of 1 to 5 and funding on a sliding scale. However, the application process should be streamlined by simplifying the applications. I believe that OWEB would be able to rank applicants based on 10-page applications just as well as they do based on 30-page applications....regardless of length/complexity, applicants will still fall out on a bell-shaped curve. OWEB should conduct an analysis of how much money is spent preparing and reviewing Council Support applications relative to how much money is distributed. Given the excessive amount of time required to complete, process and

review the applications, the total cumulative "cost" is probably very high (when you account for the costs of the reviewers' time, OWEB staff time, etc.).

- I do not like flat funding; that does not recognize diversity of councils and their work. I suppose regional basis could work if one looks at priorities in a region and targets regional priorities to fund, looking at real or potential effectiveness (how to gauge that?). Funding for areas with ESA compliance issues: too narrow a focus.
- To further explore the RFP's issued by OWEB addressing defined restoration priorities.
- The idea of RFPs (brief RFPs) is appealing, so that all the time and effort that goes into an OWEB grant is not spent uselessly - good idea, as long as it is a BRIEF RFP that is required. Do not use EPA or NOAA as a model.
- perhaps OWEB should have grants as currently do-where lots of innovative ideas could come forward- but I like the idea of RFP's- I've have a few meetings at various councils where OWEB has been there-where the council says to OWEB, 'what would you like us to focus on?' and then OWEB says, 'well, what would you like to focus on?" then the councils says, 'well, what do you want us to focus on?' it seems like OWEB and councils have confidence of community so if OWEB was a bit more explicit that might be interesting for some RFPs, but still have open ended grants as well. Flat funding seems nice- but it might get a little to entitlement-ish...
- I do not like the idea of flat funding. Process should be kept competitive.
- The answer to this question really depends on the primary OWEB goal. If it is to achieve long-lasting ecological restoration and stewardship everywhere across the landscape, then flat funding for Council support is the way to go. If OWEB is really dedicated to grass roots, bottom-up conservation, I think this is the best approach. If some other federally driven conservation mandate is driving, then it may make sense to issue RFPs or provide additional funds for Councils that must comply with ESA. You must recognize that while it may be more costly to deal with ESA issues, there are also far more funds available for these locales with species in the emergency room. I would like to see the state acting proactively to keep ESA-free areas out of the emergency room.
- I think there are different models that should definitely be explored. Maybe group councils by there watershed priorities.
- Individual watershed councils should represent their watershed and their community. Their may be a value in more regional management but not to the extent that councils become disconnected from their community.
- I think some RFP's to address specific issues would be useful for restoration funds. It would also help to identify some target priority areas, but move those around the state so there are more opportunities. Try to keep the process fairly simple (not like the SIP program, but perhaps like the coastal emergency funds) so that people can access funds more easily for important projects.

b. Are there modifications to the existing funding program that would make it more equitable?

- No.
- Even though the application is not likely to change, we can still look at the review process to make it more equitable. It is unfair and inexplicable that there are councils listed as excellent and yet the review comments talk about how poor the application is. Also, I do not think there is enough difference to break councils out into so many categories. When reading the reviews and seeing other council work, most are

operating in one of three categories (1) they know their niche and are building projects accordingly, (2) they need help defining their niche and have some project work that keeps them going and (3) they are not functioning. When reading the budget note that lead to the merit based system, it doesn't say anything about ranking and grading them against each other (which is really what the review process ends up doing now). It says funding should be based on performance and accomplishments. If every council has benchmarks for performance defined and can describe reasonable progress towards reaching them, then we should all be excellent and that is okay. I once had an OWEB staff person tell me that if that happened then councils on the top would get less money than they are used to. But why should my council be perpetually underfunded if they are doing good work that demonstrates performance and accomplishments just because we did not start on top. There are a lot of rumors that at the end of the council support grant application process that region reps basically throw out scoring of applications and rank councils in the excellent, very good, good, etc. categories as they see fit. That would explain why some of the applicants with poor applications ended up in the excellent category. This is not equitable or transparent. The review process needs to be changed if not the council support application. Also, on other grant programs, there is a lot of concern that review teams are behind closed doors. It sounds like people get the same kind of confidence behind close doors as they often do over e-mail to say things that are not appropriate or incorrect that can sink a perfectly good project. Many agency grant programs allow this process to be accessible to the public and even ask applicant questions. In the interest of transparency and retaining public confidence, we really need to make this process more equitable also by allowing them to be open for the public to observe or to be more firm in facilitation to keep the discussion to technical merits.

- The funding process should be fair, transparent and competitive. However, if equitable means that poor performers are funded in the same way as outstanding performers, then the funding program should not be equitable. Fair, honest, friendly competition is what keeps WC's from becoming stagnant and ineffective. Given that WC's are independent organizations (not state agencies), they should be subject to this kind of friendly competition to keep them functioning at a high level.
- Let councils rate their own effectiveness using their own standards. On application, let council list 5 measures of success and rate their effectiveness at reaching those 5 measures. The reviewers will have to decide if those measures are worth funding by asking if they meet OWEB and OR Plan goals?
- No comment.
- It appeared in the Council Support grant deliberations that too much emphasis was put on 'council capacity', which translated into not how successful the council was in developing and maintaining partnerships, accomplishing meaningful projects, or doing outreach - but, was heavily based on whether or not the council followed and met all the Council capacity procedures and protocols.
- The Eastern Regional review teams (for all categories of non-support grant funding) should be reorganized so that non-anadromous Councils are competing only with each other for competitive funding avenues from OWEB. Non-support funding options between anadromous and non-anadromous councils are disparate and prioritization of project applications, within the review teams, is understandably weighted heavily in favor of anadromous watersheds. Realizing that WC support does not evaluate councils by anadromous presence, we still hope that OWEB realizes how dependent WC

capacity is on other grant awards distributed by OWEB, e.g. restoration. Non-anadromous WCs need a more equal playing field.

- No.
- Issue Council support as block grants, perhaps in three tiers, acknowledging the differences in geographic extent, population density, and unique needs of hard-start or low staffing Councils (at least in the short term). Loosen limitations on use of admin funds, to acknowledge the real cost of doing business to put projects on the ground, which also serves to fairly reward very active Councils for the real work they are accomplishing.
- Within the categories of Excellent, Very Good, etc. WCs - there should be no differentiation of funding except that based on umbrella designation. All WC within the ranking competitive category should receive the same base funding. It should not be prorated on score within the category; that is when ugly politics can step in. The problem might be a few scores that fall at the very low or very high end of a category. Perhaps OWEB might consider adding interim categories between the existing category whose funding would be an average of the lower one with the higher. This would not be so disheartening as finding yourself at the low end of the Very Good Category with all those WCs above you to climb over!
- See 4, above*
- Offer a flat rate for all the councils (provided that they prove they are meeting requirements and doing what they say they will do) and the offer additional funding on a competitive basis.

c. Should OWEB continue to fund low performing councils?

- Depends on whether they have streams with anadromous fish, or as mentioned, other endangered species that might benefit. Funding could increase, but perhaps there might at some point be a need to remove an ineffective coordinator...?
- Yes and no. I don't think they can be dropped yet because the council support application still does not allow OWEB or reviewers to assess progress from the previous biennium to the next because the application does not reflect on what was promised. Again, an application that has those benchmarks laid out and reporting to achieving them would help assess if the councils are moving forward or not and that data would help determine a no fund decision.
- Not beyond a trial period. OWEB should offer low performing WC's a limited period of time and a limited amount of funding to meet specific benchmarks. If the WC's meet the benchmarks, they should be brought back to good standing. If they do not, they should not be funded.
- YES, with a probation period in which council receives special mentoring, council capacity assistance and support, and frequent review and communication. I would recommend funding an OWEB position or give RPR more support/time to do that work.
- Prior to a NO...but careful determination of the individual WC group low performance and continued failure to achieve goals, etc.
- No.
- Yes, perhaps at .5FTE + operating budget. No WC should be hired to assess problems and recommend solutions or discontinuation of funding.
- How important is their work? If critical, OWEB should help build capacity if possible, otherwise abandon if nothing is happening. How are low performing councils defined?

- One bad year should not be the death knell for a Council but if the performance is consistently poor don't waste the money.
- Not sure- of course not funding low performance councils sounds appealing- but once you got rid of the 'low performers' the medium performers would be considered 'low performers'... if that makes sense.
- At reduced rates perhaps but the judgment would be tricky.
- No.
- I think there should be a probationary period, where low performing councils are given additional technical assistance to determine why they are performing poorly and given an opportunity to address root causes. In the case of an area where the local populace is simply not ready for any level of active restoration, it may behoove OWEB to recognize that and to provide funds specifically for outreach and partnerships, designed to get to receptivity and action.
- No but I think if they are considering cutting funding on low performing councils they need to talk with those councils and discuss why their performance is low. If it is because they cannot get funding, ask them why. If they don't have the participation then that is probably a good sign that they are going to have a hard time raising their performance.
- No. However, OWEB should work with these councils to help them become high performers if possible. If funding is stopped for these councils there should be a way for future councils to develop if they can show a likelihood of being productive.
- Offer sufficient funding and help to struggling councils on a one time basis. If they can't make needed improvements in two years then cut them off.

5. What works/doesn't work in the application process?

- One-size-fits-all RE: criteria.
- I'll just reiterate some previous points. What doesn't work is the review process and reporting on accomplishments because it doesn't relate back to previous promises made.
- What works: -The vast majority of applicants (95%?) appear to be ranked fairly. The process will never be perfect but it is generally pretty fair. What doesn't work: -The process is far too cumbersome for applicants, reviewers and OWEB. OWEB should establish a guiding philosophy that application processes should be as simple and streamlined as possible. A critical examination of the process with this philosophy in mind would likely lead to major improvements.
- Too much of application is background info that does not change significantly over time. Maybe the boiler plate background info is needed for educating reviewers, but it gets tiresome for applicant. Give us points for being clear and concise and we will do the same for you. Be direct, ask questions that get to the meat of what reviewers need to know to evaluate if we are using our funds effectively. We have gotten dinged on our application for items that we thought we addressed. Example: there is little timber industry in our watershed, but reviewers always seem to comment on our lack of timber representation. Timber is not very present or has much of an impact, but even when we state it, reviewers don't seem to get it, but they have their view of what a council should be. Annoying.
- What doesn't/didn't work for us - Section III.

- It is a great mystery, so I expect most councils have no idea how it works much less how well.
- I like the application- it makes you really think about the process- but maybe we haven't filled it out as many times as other councils.
- Application review teams seem to consider reputation of councils too much, and seem to overlook what is stated in the applications.
- No experience to date.
- The Council Support Application tends to be repetitive. I think OWEB could get by with cutting some of the questions out and making it more to the point. Maybe they could add a question that would help them group up the different councils priorities, needs, and capacity.
- Complex and redundant applications are time consuming. A feedback process to be helpful where councils can respond to and clarify questions that grant reviewer have. Grand funds should be provided based on the proposed project's value rather than on a council's grant writing skills.
- The form itself is decent and much better than previous years. It would be better to just do a simple budget (like what we end up with in our contract). I'm not sure why all the detail is needed if we are going to simplify it anyway for the contract. It would also be good to ask councils to report on what they have accomplished (compared to what they said they would accomplish).

a. How well is the application process working in defining and differentiating council support needs?

- I think on whole, it works well.
- Very little to not at all.
- I don't understand this question.
- Fair. See suggestions given in other parts of survey.
- Did not.
- Poorly, in my opinion.
- OK.
- I think it working ok. There are councils that feel like they should be ranked higher and when you talk to OWEB staff they agree with you a lot of the time. So what is going wrong in the review process? Do the reviewers not completely understand each council and what they are saying? I think that instead of the councils writing in to the review team they should have the option to go and talk to them face to face. It makes things much clearer. Then if the review team still feels the same way then they can rank them accordingly. I know that time is a factor in the application process but sometimes I think that if they took a little more time to understand each council it would help tremendously.
- Not very well.
- Not well at all for our council. We have never received council support funding yet are one of the most productive councils in our region.*
- I'm not sure what this question is asking.

b. What changes or improvements would you recommend to the application process for council support funding?

- Touring the local watersheds and seeing completed projects.

- See previous comments on benchmarks and reporting on accomplishments.
- See answer to question #5. In addition, I think it is critically important that the process be consistent over time. OWEB frequently changes application forms and processes, making it challenging for applicants to learn from one process and apply it to the next. With more consistency, applicants would (over time) better understand the processes, and then likely perform better on the applications. Eventually, this would lead to a better process.
- Shorter. Too the point. The accomplishments and work plan seem to be the most important, emphasize that.
- Drastically shorten Section III since most applications are submitted every two years, why not just as for what has changed in Section I the section on working collaboratively is all about money; since that is covered in the Match attachment, why not ask for examples of collaboration and cooperation that do not involve money, but do speak to involvement and dedication.
- Simplify, Simplify, Simplify and open the doors and windows.
- Straight answers to direct questions from applicants in the process. It sometimes seems like OWEB staff know the answer they want but are not specific. Sort of a read my mind between the lines deal.
- I like biennial approach. Keep applications short and to the point.
- Don't really know. See above.*
- It would be good to ask councils to report on what they have accomplished (compared to what they said they would accomplish). Council should be able to highlight what they are good at rather than trying to do well in all categories. The review process does not seem to produce fair results in some cases. I'm not sure why this is happening. Some of it may be bias on the part of the RPR, or additional info brought in by reviewers (or how an application is written). It would seem to be easier to level the playing field and have some solid criteria that councils have to meet for funding.

6. What is the single highest priority for change in OWEB's council support funding program?

- Unknown.
- Review process to scoring. Less categories and more recognition that most of us are moving forward in a journey towards watershed restoration. Performance and accomplishments (i.e. merit) is not only number of projects but rather how far did you travel on that journey in the last 2 years to meeting your community vision for your watershed.
- It should be more efficient (i.e., more streamlined applications). For every hour that a WC staff spends writing the application, OWEB staff spends processing and agency staff spend reviewing it, there is one less hour being invested in watershed restoration activities.
- Streamlining bureaucracy and admin work. Make the process clear, simple, and less time consuming. The less time coordinators are sucked into learning about and doing admin and bureaucracy the better. Making idiot guides to get coordinators etc through the fiscal admin issues may assist.
- Minimize the redundancy and frequency of financial reporting minimize the paperwork required of the Councils (e.g. those listed in Section III of the grant application)
- Consistency and openness.
- Hybrid between current funding and flat rate idea.

- Stability.
- Simplify ranking, based on formula as stated above based upon extent, population, and recognition that start-ups need more boost than ongoing operations. Loosen limitations on admin overhead, so that those funds can truly be used to fund the increased overhead faced by very active Councils. Right now, our hands are tied in using those funds flexibly to address true operating costs.
- To try and make the funding a little more fair. Instead of ranking two councils against each other with completely different priorities and capacity, rank councils that are similar and have similar needs and priorities.
- Find a way to evaluate a WC based on its defined role within the watershed(s) it must work in
- Base funding one the effectiveness and productivity of the council, not on watershed size or location. Divide funding into discrete levels such as 1) full funding to support a small office, the coordinator and some additional overhead for highly productive councils, 2) Partial funding to support part-time coordinator at a home office for moderately performing councils, 3) A small amount of council development funding and training for under achieving councils.
- The sheer amount of paperwork required to document funding.

7. Other comments?

- Thanks for providing me with the opportunity to provide feedback. I've been a board member for 10 years, and welcome the opportunity.
- Thanks for the opportunity for dialogue on these issues.
- Thank you OWEB for seeking feedback.
- This survey took too long. I appreciate the opportunity for feedback, but considering each of these questions is a brain drain, so I hope it is used.
- No, thanks for listening.
- I ran out of time so am sending what I got done.
- Thank you for listening; you are doing a great job just surviving in this revenue shortfall economy.
- Thank you for listening.
- Without OWEB there would not be Watershed Councils. They do a great job at helping to improve watershed health and needs. It sounds like we want a lot of changes but all in all OWEB really does a good job. There will always be someone out there that thinks something is not fair but that should encourage them to do a better job. If anything, I don't know that OWEB really needs to make many changes.
- Thank you for this very excellent activity - the Listening Sessions. The questions reflect a whole lot of prior preparation and thoughtfulness, not to mention knowledge of the constituents! Wonderful job - best wishes!
- OWEB could change its funding process from identifying reasons not to fund councils (the current application process) to supporting councils through training to become more effective and deserving of funding. This is an area where regional management could be really effective
- I appreciate the opportunity to comment. I think OWEB is doing a good job. I recognize that some of the challenges are caused by forces external to OWEB. I would like to see some discussion about creative funding that is separated from the regular grant cycles.