

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

Update Winter 2005

There are a couple of questions floating in the watershed world of Oregon these days, and they sound something like this:

“What the heck is the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils, and what does it have to do with my watershed?”

Our Purpose

Here is some information to help answer those questions. Though the name is still a working title, the “Network” came together through the persistence and hard work of watershed council regional representatives, other coordinators and council members throughout Oregon during these past several years. Its purpose is to support the work of watershed councils in accordance with the three principles the councils agreed upon in 2003:

1. **Help to build council capacity** (training, information sharing, funding and internal communication).
2. **Work to improve key relationships with watershed council partners** (OWEB, OACD, Oregon Plan Liaisons, other organizations in the state).
3. **Promote public awareness of watersheds and watershed councils**
 - a. develop a watershed outreach program in partnership with the Oregon Plan Team, OSU Extension, OWEB and others;
 - b. publish a Statewide Atlas of Accomplishments;
 - c. establish a Network website for both the public and the councils; and,
 - d. coordinate communication and education to elected officials about the work of councils.

Staff

In November, the Regional Representatives contracted with John Moriarty to be the first statewide Coordinator of the Network, and in early December added Jenny Bayn as Assistant Coordinator through the University of Oregon’s Resource Assistance to Rural Environments (RARE) program. John and Jenny will serve to both spearhead and support the work of councils to reach the goals of the Network.

An Important Note

The concept of having a statewide organization for watershed councils is to support their good work, as well as to celebrate and promote the local character and approach of each council. One of the greatest strengths of watershed councils, demonstrated through their membership and their actions, is the fact that each one reflects the local community and watershed. That’s the story the Network will help tell.

Sincere thanks to the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board for their grant funding, and to our grant partners: the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts, OSU Extension, BLM, the Forest Service, U of O RARE Program, Henderson Printing and River Network. Special thanks to the City of Eugene for their generous contribution of office space. As we move into the New Year and get our feet planted more firmly on the ground, we look forward to working with our partners for the creation of healthier watersheds and local communities by supporting the watershed councils that serve them.

Network Highlights

Regional Representative Chair, Jason Dedrick of the Crooked River WC, and Network Statewide Coordinator, John Moriarty, announced the formation of the new organization at the 56th Annual Meeting of the OACD, Nov. 14-17th in Eugene. The announcement received a warm welcome from SWCDs and OACD President, Johnny Sundstrom, who reinforced the theme of partnership and cooperation between districts and councils. Linking the announcement and the Network's acronym (NOWC), Sundstrom said, "Well, the time is NOW, see!"

News of the Network was spread even further during OWEB's 8th Biennial Conference in Ashland, Nov. 17-19th. The overwhelming response from partner organizations and agencies was, "Yes! Not a moment too soon!" As one partner after another commented, "Watershed councils are doing such great work throughout the state; their story just has to be told!"

During the OWEB conference, watershed councils and a number of their partners gathered to begin the work of making progress on the Network's goals. Six working groups were formed that will continue to operate in the coming months:

Organizational structure

(Leads: Michael Carlson, crbc@clackamasriver.org, Todd Cullison, tcullison@columbiaestuary.org)

- What will be the form of the Network?
- How will communication between councils and regional reps work?
- How will decisions be made quickly while still reflecting the diversity of councils statewide?

Educational briefs

(Lead: Jennifer Hampel, jennifer.hampel@verizon.net)

- Creation of one-page, user-friendly fact sheets to inform the public and policy makers at all levels of what watershed councils are, how they operate and what they're not
- Brief descriptions of council projects occurring in different parts of the state
- Telling the watershed council story

Watershed outreach

(Lead: Andrea Johnson, nnwc@oregoncoast.com)

- Strategizing to improve understanding of watersheds and watershed councils by the general public
- How do we get more people aware of and involved in watershed councils and watershed restoration work?
- How do we link these strategies to those of OSU Extension and OWEB?
- What changes can be made to meet the outreach objectives set out in the Watershed Weeks grant (now being coordinated by the Network)?

Working Groups Continued...

Outreach to decision makers (lead: Cyndy Coleman, cyndy.coleman@orst.edu)

- Strategies to inform policy makers at the local, county, state and federal level about the work that councils do
- Reminding elected officials that councils are NOT an interest group, they are the place where all the interest groups come together to work on watershed-related issues

2005 Gathering

(Lead: Jason Dedrick, Jason.dedrick@orst.edu)

- Planning for the watershed councils' Fall 2005 gathering focused on training and networking

Website development

(Lead: Jennifer Hampel, jennifer.hampel@verizon.net)

- Strategies to build a Network website that will serve to improve communication and information sharing among councils AND provide clear and attractive information to the public

Statewide Coordinator, John Moriarty, met in early December with Jim Azumano, the new Director of the Governor's Office of Rural Policy. This was an introductory meeting also attended by Larry Ouja of ODA, John McDonald of OACD and Ken Bierly of OWEB. Jim will be keeping a close eye on issues affecting rural communities and expressed a strong desire to be in touch with councils and coordinators as he travels the state.

John met with a number of council coordinators in Salem on December 13th, as they arrived to submit their council support grants. A few of the hardy souls gathered for beverages and burgers after the 5:00 pm deadline for a collective sigh of relief.

What's Next...

As we head into 2005, the Network of Oregon Watershed Councils is undertaking a number of projects to support the work of watershed councils statewide. Here are a few of the highlights:

- Assistant coordinator, Jenny Bayn, is leading the effort to create a statewide atlas of watershed council accomplishments. Working with Jenny are some of the Willamette basin coordinators who took the lead in creating the Willamette Accomplishments Atlas in 2003
- Watershed Council regional representatives will meet on January 28th in Salem to plan Network activities in the coming months
- Statewide Network coordinator, John Moriarty, is traveling to Salem to inform legislators about the work that watershed councils accomplish around the state and listen for any concerns to which councils may want to respond
- The Website Working Group will work with John and a website design consultant on the first phase of creating a Network website at oregonwatersheds.org
- The Educating Decision-makers Working Group will work with John to develop a strategy for coordinating and assisting council members from throughout the state in communicating with their local and state representatives
- The 2005 Gathering Working Group will work with Jenny on the early stages of planning for our Fall 2005 gathering—Watch for a date and location announcement soon!

None of these great projects can happen without your help, so please share this information with your councils and please contact us for more information or to volunteer on any of these projects.

Network of Oregon Watershed Councils

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Contact List

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Specific Activities' Lead Persons	Outlined in statewide work plan; please contact Coordinator

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Lu Anthony,
Little Butte

Jennifer Hampel,
Coquille

Willamette

Michael Carlson,
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