

January 24-25, 2007 OWEB Board Meeting Executive Director Update #C1: Research Grants Update

Background

In 1999, the Legislature enacted ORS 541.378 establishing a “Restoration and Protection Research Fund” from all interest earned from Ballot Measure 66 Lottery Funds. The research funds are subject to the 35 percent non-capital and 65 percent capital distribution as are all Measure 66 dedicated lottery funds.

In January 2001, the Board adopted a Research Investment Strategy to guide OWEB funding of research supporting implementation of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds. The strategy identified four principles: 1) Identify critical information needs; 2) Fund research projects that address priority needs first; 3) Communicate research results to users; and 4) Evaluate what is learned and determine new priority needs.

In March 2001, the Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team (IMST) reviewed the strategy and identified 12 priority Oregon Plan research needs and ranked them in relative order of importance. After review by stakeholders, the research priorities were adjusted and adopted by the Board in March 2002. Since then, the Legislature has directly appropriated research funds for several projects, but has not given OWEB the expenditure authority to allocate these funds at the Board’s discretion as with other grant programs.

At the May 2006 Board meeting, staff proposed a formal process for considering research proposals that has clear criteria, utilizes the appropriate scientific expertise for evaluating requests, and minimizes impacts on current staff workload. Board members unanimously approved the review process. Since then, OWEB has used the Sea Grant program at Oregon State University to assist in the administration of the research grant solicitation and review process.

Research Grants Review Process

Sea Grant solicited research pre-proposals for the 2007-2009 biennium and received 33 preliminary concept papers by the September 22, 2006, deadline. The pre-proposals were reviewed by a subcommittee of the Oregon Plan Monitoring Team. The subcommittee prioritized the pre-proposals based on their potential to address research questions that are relevant to the OWEB Research Priorities, the Oregon Coast Coho Recovery Plan priorities, existing management needs or uncertainties, or are expected to produce findings that are tangible and useful for near-term management purposes. The subcommittee forwarded their analysis and recommendations to the OWEB management team. Based on these recommendations, OWEB staff requested full proposals from 14 of the applicants.

Sea Grant will administer the full proposal review process selecting reviewers with a broad range of scientific expertise from their existing database. OWEB staff will receive reviewers’ comments and rankings of full proposals in the spring of 2007, and will make final funding recommendations to the Board in September of 2007.

Staff Contact

Contact Greg Sieglitz at greg.sieglitz@state.or.us or 503-986-0194 with questions about OWEB’s research grant process.