



December 21, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board

FROM: Melissa Leoni, Senior Policy Coordinator

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item I: Mid-Coast Report Follow-up
January 16-17, 2008 OWEB Board Meeting**

I. Introduction

This report seeks Board approval of funding to support mediation and training for watershed councils in the Mid-Coast area.

II. Background

At the May 15-16, 2007, OWEB Board meeting in Salem, the Board heard testimony from a citizen from Newport that included allegations about the Mid-Coast Watershed Council (MCWC) and its watershed council support grant application. The Board Co-Chairs committed OWEB to look into the issues raised and later tasked the Executive Director with conducting an investigation into the allegations. OWEB's Executive Director reported the results of that investigation to the Board Co-Chairs on August 30, 2007. On the basis of the issues investigated, OWEB staff found no conclusive evidence to support the allegations made against the MCWC. The investigation identified a number of areas that could merit further consideration by OWEB. Those recommendations were that:

1. OWEB should review policies and rules applicable to umbrella watershed councils, and evaluate council support application requirements to ensure that OWEB is receiving the necessary documentation.
2. OWEB should explore opportunities to provide training to watershed councils on contracting and public meetings law.
3. OWEB should strengthen its communications and relationships with local government regarding watershed council formation, functions, and responsibilities.
4. OWEB should better identify its expectations for watershed councils, especially its expectations for citizen and landowner involvement.
5. OWEB should consider offering funding to provide mediation or other forms of assistance to help the MCWC strengthen its community relationships.

The first recommendation is addressed in Agenda Item T, Administrative Rulemaking. The fifth is addressed in this report. Staff are developing implementation plans for the remaining recommendations. Staff will report back on these recommendations over the coming year.

III. Mid-Coast Assistance Proposal

Staff have been pursuing an implementation plan for the fifth recommendation that OWEB consider offering funding to provide mediation or other forms of assistance to the Mid-Coast Watershed Council to improve council and community relationships. Staff, in discussion with the MCWC Coordinator, have identified two forms of assistance that we think could both benefit members of all the watershed councils in the Mid-Coast area and the relationships between councils in the area. Those proposals are described in the following sections.

A. Effective Watershed Council Member Training

The purpose of this assistance would be to improve consensus and decision-making processes and behavior issues, and to clarify council member roles and responsibilities for all members of watershed councils in the Mid-Coast area. This assistance would involve an interagency agreement with Oregon State University Extension Service to provide two training sessions in the area based on existing modules from the Watershed Stewardship Education Program. These trainings may be half day or evening sessions and all council members would be invited to attend one of the trainings. The cost of two trainings is estimated to be \$5,000.

B. Mediated Joint Council Meetings

The purpose of this assistance would be to provide a mediator to conduct joint meetings between the MCWC and Salmon-Drift WC and between the MCWC and the Alsea WC following the training for council members. The goal of this assistance would be to improve relationships between watershed councils in the area, to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each group, to support ongoing efforts, and build partnerships and relationships between the councils. Staff anticipate that this assistance will cost approximately \$15,000.

IV. Recommendation

Staff recommend the Board allocate up to \$20,000 in non-capital funds to support the proposal described in Section III of the staff report and delegate distribution authority to the Executive Director to enter into agreements as necessary to implement this funding allocation.