



# OWEB Water Acquisition Grant Program

## Summary for Public Outreach

### Introduction

OWEB values public and community engagement in its grant decision-making. The agency seeks public comment from diverse perspectives to make the best possible granting decisions and ensure outcomes benefit all Oregonians to the greatest extent possible. OWEB intends to provide notification and meaningful opportunities for engagement to all parties with a potential interest in acquisition projects being considered by OWEB. For each acquisition grant offering, OWEB will consistently provide notification, outreach, and opportunities for public input on all acquisition projects being considered for funding. The purpose of this document is to describe the OWEB Water Acquisition program's standard public and community engagement process for grant applications.

### Background on the OWEB Water Acquisition Program

The Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) specify that OWEB may fund projects involving the purchase of interests in water from willing sellers for the purpose of maintaining or restoring streamflow or improving water quality. The OWEB water acquisition program supports projects across the state to plan and implement the acquisition of an interest in water in accordance with the purposes above and for the benefit of native fish and wildlife and their habitats. [Chapter 695, Division 46 of Oregon Administrative Rules \(OAR\)](#) articulates rules guiding the OWEB Water Acquisition Program.

From OAR 695-046-0010: "In accordance with Section 4b of Article XV of the Oregon Constitution and ORS 541.956, OWEB may consider grant applications that propose to acquire from willing sellers interests in water that result in Legally or Contractually Protected Instream Flow to maintain or restore streamflows for the benefit of watersheds and habitats for native fish or wildlife."

As stated in rule, "OWEB does not itself hold an interest in water rights in grants authorized under these rules, but rather allocates funding for Water Acquisition projects to other entities, which may result in the State of Oregon or other entities holding the interest in water rights."

### Public Outreach Process for OWEB Water Acquisition Program

Given public and community interest in this program, the program uses the following steps in its public and community engagement process:

- OAR 695-046-0205 specifically outlines public involvement opportunities within the OWEB Water Acquisition Program, including:
  - Providing notification through the OWEB website of the OWEB board's intent to consider water acquisition grant applications;
  - Holding public hearings for Water Acquisition grant applications that request funding for Permanent Instream Transfers;
  - Taking written comments in advance of the OWEB board meeting at which the grant application will be considered by the OWEB board; and

- Taking oral comments at the OWEB board meeting at which the grant application will be considered by the OWEB board.
- In addition to the public involvement requirements in administrative rule, OWEB takes several additional steps to provide public outreach and notification for the program:
  - Announcing Water Acquisition grant solicitations via the OWEB website and the GovDelivery notification system.
  - Including specific reference in Water Acquisition program guidance to this Summary of Public Outreach document, the intent of which is to facilitate a more fully informed public process.
  - During pre-application consultation meetings that are strongly recommended for all applicants, OWEB encourages applicants to engage with the local community, including government officials, about the proposed project prior to submitting a grant application to OWEB.
  - Including questions within the OWEB Water Acquisition grant applications about: a) applicant's experience with accommodating state and local economic and social issues, b) anticipated tribal government interaction with the project, c) notification to an irrigation district if the proposed project is within the district's boundary; and d) landowner agreement/certification.
  - Completing public notification about eligible Water Acquisition grant applications received to: a) Tribal Governments, b) elected officials (i.e., state legislators, county governments, and—when applicable—local governments), c) irrigation districts if the project is within the district's boundary, and d) subscribers to OWEB's GovDelivery notification system. This email notification informs them of the proposed water acquisition project in their area and how to provide written or oral public comment to the OWEB board.