



OREGON
WATER
RESOURCES
DEPARTMENT

Water Project Grants and Loans: Seasonally Varying Flows

What is the Seasonally Varying Flow (SVF) requirement?

A Seasonally Varying Flow (SVF) is a requirement of certain above and below ground storage projects funded through Water Project Grants and Loans, a funding opportunity of the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD).

An SVF is defined as streamflow that should remain instream in order to protect and maintain the ecological functions of winter flows balanced with the need to store water. The SVF requirement results in conditions on a storage water right that impact the timing and rate of fill of a reservoir. These conditions likely include reservoir management that responds to streamflow conditions.

When is an SVF required?

A SVF is required for projects funded through Water Project Grants and Loans that store water diverted outside the irrigation season, and that meets any one of the following criteria:

- Impounds surface water on a perennial stream
- Diverts water from a stream that supports sensitive, threatened or endangered fish species, or
- Diverts more than 500 acre-feet of surface water

How may the SVF requirement impact my project?

As of May 2020, OWRD has developed a SVF for one project – therefore it is not possible to fully estimate potential impacts. OWRD anticipates that each SVF will have circumstances specific to the project that will make the development process and outcomes unique; however, the grantee can expect the following potential impacts to their project:

- **Longer Schedule.** The SVF process may take more than 1-2 years to complete and the timing depends on a number of factors. Grant funds will not be released until an SVF is established and the resulting water right is issued. This may increase the overall schedule for your project.
- **Increased Costs.** The SVF permit conditions will likely require the collection of data from streamgages, reservoir gages, and diversion measurement devices. The water right holder (grantee) is responsible for covering costs of complying with water right conditions. Operation of data-collection devices to appropriate standards can be a significant cost. Some costs, such as equipment and installation, may be covered by grant funds, if requested in the application.

Where can I get more information?

For more information about this requirement and other aspects of Water Project Grants and Loans, email OWRD.Grants@water.oregon.gov or call 971-301-0718. More details are also available in the [statute](#) and [rules](#) governing the funding opportunity. Oregon Revised Statute 541.651 and 541.689 along with Oregon Administrative Rules 690-93-0130 and Appendix specifically address the SVF requirement.

How is the SVF developed?

Consultation

Per statute and rule, OWRD develops the SVF in consultation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Affected Tribes. The grantee can inform and observe all steps of the SVF consultation process, but does not have a role in legally establishing the SVF. However, the grantee does provide critical information about project operations and feasibility that are considered during consultation.

Study Plan and Technical Findings

OWRD is required, per statute and rule, to use scientific information collected using standard methods to develop the recommended flow prescription that informs the SVF. This requires using the SVF Matrix to determine the level of effort required to have sufficient information for the development of the flow prescription ([OAR 690-093-0130 Appendix](#)).

Balancing Approach

Balancing the needs of stream functions with due regard to the need to store water is a requirement of the SVF. Balancing considers the SVF technical findings as well as input from the grantee on the feasibility of operating a project.

Water Right Conditions and Processes

The SVF, once finalized, will be used to develop conditions on the storage permit for the project. Conditions related to the SVF will likely include the timing and rate of diversions, measurement and reporting conditions, and other conditions as needed.

