



Oregon Water Resources Congress

1201 Court St. NE, Suite 303 | Salem, OR 97301-4188 | 503-363-0121 | Fax: 503-371-4926 | www.owrc.org

December 5, 2011

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Ms. Avra Morgan
Office of Policy and Administration 84-51000
PO Box 25007
Denver, CO 80225

Subject: OWRC Comments on the Draft WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Funding Opportunity Announcement

Submitted via email to: aomorgan@usbr.gov

Dear Ms. Morgan:

The Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) is submitting comments on the U.S. Department of Interior's Draft WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Funding Opportunity Announcement. OWRC was established in 1912 as a trade association to support member needs to protect water rights and encourage conservation and water management statewide. OWRC represents irrigation districts, water control districts, and other local government entities that deliver agricultural water supplies throughout the State of Oregon. About one-half of our members are in Bureau of Reclamation Projects; most of the rest of our members have contracts for water with Reclamation.

OWRC and its members strongly support the U.S. Department of Interior's (Interior) efforts to secure and sustain water supplies through the WaterSMART Program. OWRC members are dependent upon adequate water supplies in order to continue delivering irrigation water throughout Oregon and greatly appreciate the opportunities that the WaterSMART program has provided to increase certainty and sustainability of water supplies. We have been supportive of the concept of the Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP) since its inclusion in Public Law 111-11 in 2009 and view this program as a promising addition to the WaterSMART toolbox.

Oregon already has a robust state watershed planning program and numerous established watershed councils around the state. Our members are active participants in watershed councils and are partners in a variety of restoration projects. The CWMP can provide the opportunity for our members and other basin stakeholders to improve and expand upon these existing efforts that will yield greater water conservation and watershed enhancement. Providing federal funding to enhance collaborative water management solutions at the local level is a wise use of scarce financial resources that can pay dividends for years to come.

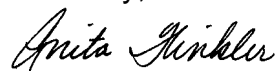
The mission of the Oregon Water Resources Congress is to promote the protection and use of water rights and the wise stewardship of water resources.

Generally, we are supportive of the concepts outlined in the Draft CWMP Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA). However, because the CWMP is a new program, and the draft FOA is currently the only available guidance, it is crucial to ensure that the process and program outcomes are clear to potential applicants. It would be helpful to have more detailed information about how the program will operate in its entirety prior to the funding announcement, particularly since this FOA is for Phase I only. The draft FOA provides some good general guidelines but is deficient in the absence of a more developed program structure. The goals of the CWMP will not be fulfilled if the program structure is not clear to applicants from the onset.

We are also confused and concerned about the inclusion of participation in a Landscape Conservation Cooperative as part of the CWMP funding criteria. This was not part of the CWMP language in Public Law 111-11 and is not mentioned elsewhere. Requiring participation in a new program that many entities, including our members, may be unfamiliar with, will likely dissuade potential applicants. We would encourage that this addition to the criteria be removed and the language refocused on the CWMP in future documents.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Funding Opportunity Announcement. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Interior and its agencies as partners in developing sustainable water resources for the future.

Sincerely,



Anita Winkler
Executive Director