



65 SW Yamhill Street, Suite 200
Portland, Oregon 97204
503.222.9091 MAIN OFFICE
www.thefreshwatertrust.org

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Governor-elect John Kitzhaber
PO Box 4593
Portland, OR 97208

December 28, 2010

Dear Governor-elect Kitzhaber,

The Oregon Stream Restoration Partnership (SRP) is a diverse set of non-profit, landowner, local watershed-based entities and state and federal agencies working together to facilitate more restoration actions by private landowners in and along streams across the state. Our goal is to improve Oregon's freshwater health in a more timely manner. We focus on new tools and new thinking to address institutional barriers to efficient restoration actions that, if left unaddressed, will prevent Oregon from achieving watershed health in a meaningful timeframe.

On behalf of the SRP, I write to ask that your administration prioritize this issue and advance work specified in the attached documents and further below to improve regulatory efficiency, provide regulatory incentives and strengthen agency coordination. Specifically, the SRP believes dedicated natural resource staff engagement on this issue is essential. We also ask that you continue the interagency "Governor's Core Team" under the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds as the state's convening mechanism for addressing this issue. The SRP and the Core Team are working partners on this issue and, under Governor Kulongoski's staff's leadership, have worked collaboratively to craft the attached Strategic Plan and Action Plan related to next steps. The SRP believes there is high value in continuing this partnership under your leadership, including implementation of actions specified in these Plans.

Over the past three years, the SRP has worked with the Core Team in identifying actions and strategies intended to address improvements in the regulatory processes tied to stream restoration projects. This work began when The Freshwater Trust and the Oregon Department of State Lands sponsored an Oregon Solutions project to address these issues. This work led to a broader Stream Restoration Partnership. At the same time, the Governor's Core Team was similarly focused on problems of regulatory efficiency, motivated in part by the need to move swiftly to use American Recovery and Reinvestment Act/"stimulus package" dollars to implement potential restoration projects. The existing regulatory processes made it very difficult to get these waiting projects to "shovel-ready" status, as required by ARRA.

Local, state and federal regulatory review processes have a direct impact on the design and outcome of restoration projects on-the-ground. The SRP understands that an effective, efficient regulatory process is essential to ensure that watershed restoration projects net environmental benefits rather than impacts, and that restoration work proceeds with an urgency and at a scale commensurate with the past impacts and ongoing threats to watershed health. SRP members also know from experience that the regulatory process has an extremely important effect on how government is perceived by landowners and local communities, both essential partners in achieving any vision of

watershed restoration. We envision regulatory processes that attract and incentivize landowners to take on restoration projects on their land rather than repulse or penalize them through regulations that work at cross-purposes or against broader state objectives.

We note two more things: first, because government agencies are being asked to do more work with less money, it makes sense to create efficient, forward-leaning regulatory processes focused on “do good” restoration projects; second, restoration work employs local contractors who purchase supplies and materials from local businesses. Thus there is a broader economic reason to efficiently review and approve restoration projects that provide considerable economic benefit to Oregon’s local communities.¹

Significant momentum exists as a result of the SRP’s work with the Core Team to date, including legislation, non-profit/agency partnerships, and improved coordination among agencies. Given the complexity of the issue, however, the work is far from done. We ask that your administration support this work as a high priority, both in terms of staff direction and through budget processes.²

Oregon Solutions has staffed the SRP’s work since its inception and more information on the SRP and efforts to date can be found at:

<http://www.orsolutions.org/statewide/streamrestorationpartnership.htm>

We look forward to working with you and your administration over the coming four years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JSW", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Joe Whitworth
President
On behalf of the Oregon Stream Restoration Partnership

¹ See recent research on these economic impacts by the University of Oregon, Ecosystem Workforce Program: <http://ewp.uoregon.edu/sites/ewp.uoregon.edu/files/downloads/BP23.pdf>

² One budgetary issue of particular immediate interest to the SRP is restoration of funding to the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife’s budget for the Western Oregon Stream Restoration Partnership. Elimination of ODFW field-staff positions tied to this program will directly and negatively impact the goal of engaging more private landowners in efficient and high quality stream restoration projects.