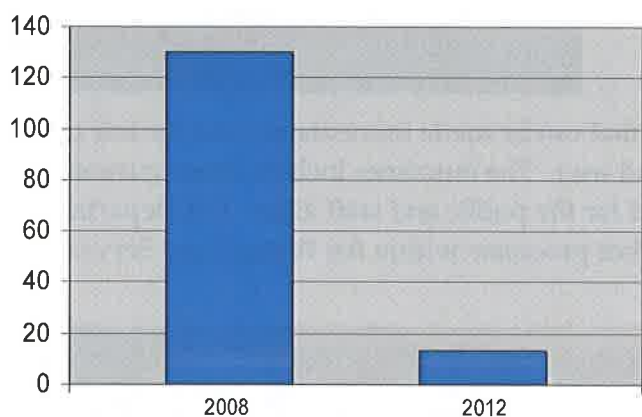




Oregon Water Resources Department

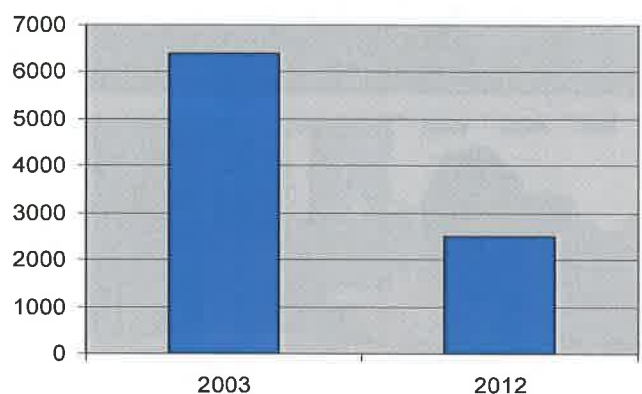
2012 Process Improvement Accomplishments

Groundwater Application Reviews



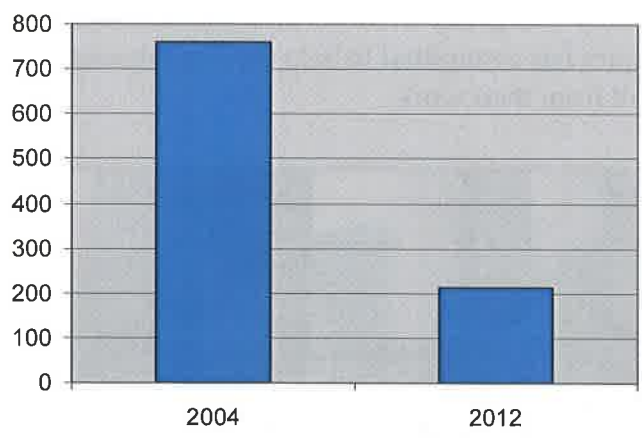
With surface water almost fully allocated across Oregon during much of the year, new water right applicants are increasingly turning to groundwater sources. The Department reviews applications for groundwater availability, injury to existing water rights, and interference with surface water resources. This work is complex and time-consuming and led to a backlog of more than 130 files by early 2008. The Department undertook steps to decrease this backlog, including hiring temporary employees to help with less complicated reviews, and postponing some groundwater research. By year-end 2010, the Department had reduced the backlog to less than 20 groundwater applications. The Department maintained this workload in 2011 and 2012.

Water Right Certificates



Securing a water right certificate is the final step in “perfecting” a water right. When issued, it provides greater management flexibility for the water user. By 2003, an extensive backlog had developed of more than 6,400 claims for certificates awaiting processing, with an annual processing rate of less than 400. To address this issue, the Department initiated several process improvement and backlog reduction strategies, including a Lean-Kaizen effort in late 2009. This, combined with the Department’s reimbursement authority program, reduced the backlog to about 2,500 by the end of 2012.

Water Right Transfers



After receiving a water right certificate, water rights holders can then use “water right transfers” to change the point of diversion, place of use, or type of use. This allows water users to move water *where* it is needed, *when* it is needed. The backlog in processing water right transfers in 2004 was about 760 applications, rendering transfers a somewhat inefficient management option. To address this backlog, the Department instituted a “completeness check” when transfer requests first arrived, to catch and correct incomplete files as soon as possible. The Department also grouped transfers by type to speed processing. In late 2009, the Department completed a Lean-Kaizen effort to ensure that transfer applications were being processed efficiently as possible. This led to additional efficiency measures. IT staff automated much of the work. As a result, the backlog in 2012 dropped to 212.

Continuous Improvement

The Water Resources Department embarked on two efforts to improve process efficiencies still more.

Lean Kaizen. In 2009, the Department's water rights, certificates, and transfer sections launched a "Lean Kaizen" process, designed to reduce the number of steps required to process these transactions, and reduce the number of person hours spent on each application. The Lean Kaizen process focuses on changes that can be made immediately and for low or no cost (e.g., redesigning forms that are easier to understand and use). The outcomes include better customer service, with paperwork and processes that are less complicated for the public and staff alike. The Department has continued to use this process improvement technique on other processes within the Water Right Services Division.



Efficiency Review Group. In addition, the Department has convened a group of outside experts, who are very familiar with Department processes and transaction programs. This diverse group represents a wide range of water use and environmental perspectives. Outcomes from this group involve recommendations for statutory, rule, or administrative changes. This group of colleagues has committed to help the Department build support for statutory or rule-making efforts that may result from their work.

