

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Connolly

Request: Authorization to apply for a grant of \$600,000 for the Oregon Tide Gate and Infrastructure Discussion Project from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Discussion: The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is requesting authorization to apply for a \$600,000 grant from NOAA's Coastal Resilience Grant Program. The total project funding is \$900,000. The grant was posted on January 18, 2017, and the application is due on March 15, 2017. The funding is anticipated to start in October 2017 and continue through September 2020. If the agency receives the grant it may return to the Legislature at a later date to request additional federal fund limitation.

The grant requires matching funds at a 2:1 ratio. Match will be provided by Measure 76 Lottery Funds under the Governor's Priorities line item in the OWEB spending plan. When the grant funding ends the agency will discontinue this project.

The goal of the project is to reduce risks from failing tide gates, protect landscapes that support local economies and enhance the ecological function of estuarine resources for fish and wildlife.

In Oregon, tide gates are used to control water in tidally influenced areas along the coast and lower portions of the Columbia River Basin. The traditional design was a gate or door into a dike that would open as freshwater drained from the upland; then pressure from incoming tides would close the gates, protecting the land behind the gates from tidal inundations. The traditional design of tidal gates can impede the migration of native fish, diminish water quality and reduce estuarine ecological functions.

Oregon does not have a statewide inventory of its tide gates, but the state believes that many tide gates are old and in need of repair or replacement before they fail completely. Current owners are faced with challenges when they need to replace their tide gates because the Muted Tidal Regulator tide gate design is one of the only replacement alternatives that meet Oregon fish passage rules. The design is not widely available and is very expensive.

This grant will be used to develop a statewide inventory using public resources and voluntary participation by owners. The inventory will help communities prioritize tide gate replacement or repair. It will work to develop alternatives to Muted Tidal Regulator technology, but also expand use of the existing technology to give owners more accessible alternatives. The project will address the concern that owners have regarding regulatory and permitting repercussions if they try to repair their tide gates by looking for opportunities to streamline and increase consistency in regulations.

The grant will directly benefit ODFW by increasing the information in their required inventory of fish passage barriers. The decision support tool and inventory will assist both OWEB and ODFW in making more efficient and impactful investments with their available staff resources and grant programs.

The proposed project has five components: Local Outreach, Tide Gate Inventory, Interactive Decision Support Tool, Engineering Toolbox, and Regulatory Toolbox. OWEB will lead the Local Outreach and the Interactive Decision Support Tool. For the Local Outreach effort OWEB will contract for facilitation services, hold twelve facilitated meetings in coastal communities and the lower Columbia Basin. Specific communities have not be identified yet, it will depend on an expressed interest to participate. OWEB will also prepare a summary report of findings related to tide gate inventory and the regulatory and financial issues surrounding the replacement of failing tide gates. The agency will also compile a list of landowner who are interested in having surveys completed on the condition of their tide gates. For the Interactive Decision Support Tool the agency will develop an interactive online tool that provides a flexible and systematic approach for identifying priority project sites. They will contract for part of the work.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) will be the lead agency for the Tide Gate Inventory and the Engineering Toolbox. For the Tide Gate Inventory ODFW would complete an inventory of coast and Columbia-wide baseline tide gates using publically available information such as existing inventories, Google Earth imagery, and local knowledge. They will also complete any voluntary tide gate surveys and develop a platform for the information. For the Engineering Toolbox ODFW will develop alternative engineering designs through work with the Oregon State University College of Engineering design challenge and other opportunities. They will explore opportunities for expansion of Muted Tidal Regulator technology which is currently only manufactured in a few locations and is viewed as prohibitively expensive by some tide gate owners.

OWEB and ODFW would share responsibility for developing the Regulatory Toolbox. They would continue and complete facilitated discussion and work sessions on regulatory streamlining; and complete an analysis and report out on option for regulatory assurances for tide gate owners who volunteer for tide gate improvement projects. They would look at opportunities to improve consistency among and within agencies that regulate tide gates or associated lands and waters.