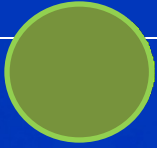


SB202 TASK FORCE ON INDEPENDENT SCIENCE
REVIEWS FOR NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE
STATE OF OREGON



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senate Bill 202 established the Task Force to evaluate and assess the need for independent science reviews in Oregon and make appropriate recommendations to the Governor and the legislature.



Institute for Natural Resources
OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

15 September 2016



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SB202 Independence Science Reviews for Natural Resources in the State of Oregon

Through Senate Bill 202 (SB202), the Oregon Legislature established the Task Force on Independent Scientific Reviews for Natural Resources to evaluate and assess the need for independent science reviews (ISRs) in Oregon and to make recommendations to the Governor and appropriate legislative committees no later than September 15, 2016. SB202 specifically charged the Task Force to: (1) assess the need for ISRs in Oregon; (2) make recommendations on one or more entities that are best situated to conduct or coordinate ISRs, if the Task Force determines that there is a need for ISRs in the state; (3) make recommendations on whether the entities identified would need legislative authority to act as ISR bodies for Oregon; and, (4) make recommendations regarding the structure and function of the process to be used by the recommended entities in the course of the ISRs.

Over a nine-month period the Task Force met six times, with extensive communication between meetings and provided numerous opportunities for public input. To inform discussions of the Task Force, staff from the Institute for Natural Resources were asked to conduct a literature review and conduct interviews with state natural resource agency staff, policy makers, and key stakeholders.

Based on the literature review, interviews, and public comments, the Task Force identified both benefits and risks associated with ISRs. The primary conclusion reached by the Task Force was that Oregon would benefit from ISRs, but in order for the benefits to outweigh the risks, Oregon's ISR process must be properly supported, questions rigorously vetted, review panels carefully selected and a transparent, systematic process for conducting reviews must be followed. Task Force found that:

- Oregon's natural resources agencies, legislators, and the public would benefit

from independent science reviews.

However, for an ISR to benefit the State the reviews need to be appropriately focused, and carried out in a deliberate, transparent manner consistent with the findings in this report. In short, "how" a review is constructed and conducted is important to achieving the full potential benefit.

- Most single-agency science reviews can be met with existing state, federal, and academic resources, but review practices and capacity for conducting reviews vary considerably among agencies.
- There is a need for independent science review of complex, multi-disciplinary issues in natural resources that span multiple agencies and are relevant to stakeholders and lawmakers, as well as managers. Existing resources are not adequate for these types of reviews.
- Independent science review mechanisms and structures that are being used for natural resources policy in other states and at the federal level can inform a process for independent science reviews in Oregon, but the state's need to reduce the potential risks of ISRs requires a tailored approach that draws on lessons learned from other ISR structures.

Based on these findings, the Task Force offers four recommendations:

- Create a robust, appropriately-resourced ISR process for natural resources in Oregon that focuses on the most urgent need: complex, multi-disciplinary, and controversial issues;

- Create a new entity, the Oregon ISR Board, and ad hoc review-specific science panels, both of which would be supported by an ISR Secretariat hosted in an existing Oregon entity;
- Oregon’s ISR process should have legislative authority; and,
- Oregon’s ISR process for natural resources should primarily focus on complex, multi-agency, interdisciplinary science issues that are of importance to the State of Oregon. We recommend a cost-effective, useful, and nimble structure that will require sufficient base funding from the State in order to ensure integrity, transparency and inclusiveness.

The Task Force recommends that Oregon’s ISR process, detailed in the report, must be adequately funded to minimize/avoid the risks, and maximize the important benefits of ISRs. Adequately funding institutional capacity for ISRs in Oregon would streamline the process and free the legislature and natural resource agencies from having to re-establish this capacity every time ISR is needed. It would help maintain institutional knowledge regarding how to conduct ISR efficiently and effectively, and promote greater consistency in ISR services and products. Experience gained with best practices and

maintaining independence in conducting ISRs could also help minimize potential interest group agenda-setting in review processes and outcomes. Independent science panel reviews may be the most visible ISR products, but institutional capacity for ISR in Oregon would also facilitate other ISR services, including informal or formal consultations between agencies or legislative bodies and science experts, workshops, or commissioned knowledge synthesis white papers.

As our state’s population and economy expand and diversify, management of Oregon’s remarkable endowment of natural resources is becoming increasingly complex and controversial. The Task Force acknowledges that while scientific evidence plays a critical role, it is not the sole factor in natural resource decisions, which also must incorporate practical management considerations and social values. However, the Task Force also believes that social and environmental costs and impacts of poorly-informed natural resource policies can be mitigated by bringing the best available relevant science to bear via rigorous, systematic review and synthesis, and timely presentation of findings in manager-friendly formats. A properly-funded, robust capacity for ISRs in Oregon would play a key role in this. Fiscal information can be found in the report and in the appendices.

Activities of the Task Force were supported by the Institute for Natural Resources at Oregon State University, and a professional facilitator, Jane Barth, who assisted with meeting and task management.

Copies of the report may be obtained by sending an email to lisa.gaines@oregonstate.edu or calling 541.737.9918. An electronic copy is also available at <http://inr.oregonstate.edu/sb202/deliverables>.

THE INSTITUTE FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

Created by the Oregon Legislature through the 2001 Oregon Sustainability Act, the Institute for Natural Resources’ mission is to provide access to integrated knowledge and information to inform natural resource decision making and develop solutions in the context of sustainability. The Institute for Natural Resources is an Oregon public universities institute located at Oregon State University and Portland State University.



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