

MINUTES

Oregon Sustainability Board



OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY
Oregon Department of
Administrative Services

Meeting Date: September 20, 2024

Time: 9:30 am to 2:30 pm

Location: Zoom and Hearts of Health Integrated Care Center, 606 Medical Pkwy,
Enterprise, OR 97828

Attendees: OSB: Rex Burkholder (Chair), Johanna Anderson, Webly Bowles, Taneea
Browning, Serena Dietrich, Autumn Wilburn, Josh Proudfoot, Elin Shepard, Tom
Kelly
DAS: Steven Markham, Jeni Hall

Guest Presenters: Karin Power, Energy and Climate Policy Advisor, Governor's Office

Welcome

9:30 - 9:45 am

Meeting called to order. Review of agenda.

Karin Power, Governor's Office

9:45 - 10:00 am

Focus on Resilience: Karin emphasized that the Governor's approach is rooted in resilience. This includes reducing the impact of climate change (e.g., wildfires) and improving preparedness. **Opportunities for State-Owned Lands:** Discussion included maximizing natural working lands to sequester carbon and using these spaces for recreation and sustainable infrastructure like electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. **Funding Opportunities:** Federal grants: Oregon has secured nearly \$300 million in federal funds for climate resilience and energy projects, including: \$97 million for solar initiatives under the Solar for All program. Also \$197 million from the EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program to fund various sustainability investments. These funds are set to be distributed over the next several years, and Karin encouraged agencies to leverage funds wisely to build long-term resilience. **Climate Adaptation:** Karin highlighted wildfire management as a pressing example of Oregon's need to adapt to climate change. She referenced this summer's wildfires and the toll they've taken on state resources, stressing the need to rethink forest management and ecological resilience.

The Governor is also interested in finding areas for innovation, such as investing in hybrid workspaces and downsizing state agency footprints for efficiency.

Board Member Responses and Discussions

- **Innovation and Sustainability:** Emphasized the need for thinking outside the box to accomplish sustainability goals. Innovation, especially in times of resource scarcity, was seen as a key strategy.
- **Shared examples of low-cost, high-impact sustainability projects** (e.g., solar energy projects for low-income housing) and suggested such innovative thinking could apply across multiple sectors.
- **Oregon's Leadership in Sustainability:** Commented that Oregon has been a leader in sustainability for many years, despite being less resourced than neighboring states like California and Washington. The state should focus on what it already does well and innovate from that foundation.

- **Prioritization of Resources:** Stressed the importance of focusing on areas where Oregon can make the greatest impact, especially given its constrained resources.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB):** Mentioned the role of workforce development in sustainability efforts. Oregon needs to communicate its sustainability goals effectively to the next generation of workers.
- **Called for more inclusive communication** to ensure that communities across the state feel part of the sustainability movement.
- **Challenges in Rural and Frontier Areas:** Emphasized the unique challenges faced by rural communities, particularly when it comes to accessing state funds for sustainability projects. The “one-size-fits-all” model does not work for frontier communities like Wallowa County.
- **Tailored Solutions:** Called for flexibility in state requirements for rural areas, suggesting different reporting standards might be needed to enable these communities to access funds and meet sustainability goals.

Governor’s office will be outlining potential strategies and actions based on the day’s discussions.

Additional Board Discussion and Work Planning 10:00 am-11:00 am

Discussion on Forest Management and Climate Change

- **Forest Management and Wildfire Prevention:**
 - Stated that Oregon cannot solely rely on **forest sequestration** as a climate solution due to the high likelihood of catastrophic wildfires in the coming decades.
 - Suggested that focusing on **fire prevention by thinning forests** and utilizing small wood materials could be a more effective strategy for both climate adaptation and economic development.
 - Argued that the **public health costs** of wildfire smoke are far more devastating than current sequestration benefits. Oregon should invest more in fire prevention to protect rural communities and the state’s natural resources.
- **Species Resilience:**
 - Noted that by 2080, Oregon’s tree species will likely change due to climate change. **Ponderosa pines, cedars, and oaks** from Northern California may become more prevalent, while traditional species like **Douglas fir** may disappear.
 - Called for **proactive planning** to adapt forestry practices to this reality and invest in **species that can withstand future climate conditions**. Reinforced the importance of forward-thinking forest management, stressing that long-term planning and **adaptation strategies** are necessary to address climate change’s impact on Oregon’s forests.

Collaboration Among State Agencies:

- There was consensus among Board members that **agencies need to collaborate** more on sustainability efforts. Several members proposed hosting a **joint summit** where agencies, commissions, and boards working on sustainability could share strategies, reduce redundancy, and align priorities.
- Create a **Venn diagram** or **organogram** to visually represent how various state entities overlap in their sustainability work.

Agency Feedback and Reporting:

- The Board discussed the need for agencies to provide feedback on how they perceive their work with the Sustainability Board. This would help ensure that the Board is adding value and not creating unnecessary burdens.
- Conduct a **360-degree review** with state agencies to assess what the Board is doing well and identify areas for improvement.

Moving Beyond Operational Metrics:

- Agencies should **move beyond basic sustainability metrics** like energy savings and recycling. While these were important milestones, the Board wants to focus on **more meaningful sustainability efforts** that align with agency core missions.
- Several members expressed a desire to see **innovative initiatives** and **deep-dive reports** on how agencies are addressing **emerging sustainability challenges**.

Other Board Business: wrap-up and adjourn. Followed by optional field trip **11:00 am**

Actions and Next Steps

1. Action Plan Development:

- The Board will investigate organizing a joint summit with other state sustainability bodies to better coordinate efforts.

2. Focus on Resilience and Innovation:

- The Board will further explore forest management strategies, climate adaptation, and how to help agencies think more creatively about their sustainability missions.

3. Agency Collaboration:

- Board members will explore ways to foster collaborative relationships with agencies rather than focusing on operational performance. The goal is to inspire agencies to innovate and prioritize impactful sustainability efforts.

Closing Remarks

- Rex concluded the session by summarizing the key takeaways from Karin's presentation and the Board's responses. The focus is on resilience, innovation, and collaboration.
- The Board plans to send a comprehensive report to the Governor.

Adjourned