

Oregon Water Partnership: 2023 Priorities



“Water insecurity may ultimately threaten the environmental and economic well-being of the entire state.”
2023 Oregon Secretary of State Report: State Leadership Must Take Action to Protect Water Security for All Oregonians

We all need reliable access to cold, clean water to sustain healthy communities, livelihoods, and ecosystems. Right now, Oregon is facing [rising water insecurity](#) that will only worsen with a changing climate. The following actions are necessary to ensure sustainable supplies for all that rely on this vital resource.

Build Resilience for Oregon’s Future

Oregon is in the midst of the worst [megadrought](#) on record, and climate change will likely make future droughts [more frequent and severe](#). We need increased focus on Oregon’s natural environment, targeting programs and projects that will help Oregon’s water resources—and the fish, families, and farms they support—be better prepared. *What’s needed:*

- **Investments in environmental drought resilience** to lessen the impact of future droughts and help Oregon leverage newly available federal dollars for fish, wildlife, and watersheds.
- **Modernizing statutes** to allow the state to better protect ecosystems and manage water proactively.

Bring Water Data into the 21st Century

Oregon lacks the fundamental data and science needed to make smart water-related decisions. Oregon’s [Integrated Water Resources Strategy](#) describes the critical need to bolster collection, analysis, and accessibility of water-related data. *What’s needed:*

- **Investment in science and technology** to quantify water supply, instream and out-of-stream water needs, water consumption, and opportunities for conservation and efficiency to ensure sustainability.
- **Funding for state agencies** for staff and equipment to support increased water data collection, management, integration, and accessibility.

Protect and Restore Our Waters

Abundant, clean water is necessary to support our iconic landscapes, fish and wildlife, cultures, and economy. Oregon’s natural infrastructure—floodplains, forests, wetlands, streams, agricultural soils—is an undervalued resource that can be less expensive and more [effective](#) than built infrastructure. *What’s needed:*

- **Increased instream protections** including the adoption of more instream water rights, support for voluntary instream transfers and leases, and designation of new state scenic waterways.
- **Investments in nature-based approaches** to expand our natural water storage capacity, improve water quality, increase disaster resilience, and benefit fish and wildlife habitat.

Support Smart Water Management

A century of mismanagement resulted in most streams being overallocated, while increased groundwater pumping has led to [wells](#) and springs drying up. *What’s needed:*

- **Modernizing groundwater management** to ensure groundwater rights are only issued if they are within the capacity of the resource.
- **Equitable protection for communities and ecosystems** to ensure that our most vulnerable communities can adapt to a changing climate, and our most resilient habitats can persist.



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