

Oregon Water Resources Department
Water Conservation, Reuse and Storage Grant Program
Evaluation for September 2, 2008 Applications

APPLICANT:	City of Medford, Water Reclamation Division		
STUDY TYPE:	Water Conservation		
APPLICATION NO.:	GC0012 09		
STUDY NAME:	Water for Irrigation, Streams and Economy (WISE)		
BASIN:	Rogue	WRD DISTRICT:	13
WRD FUNDS REQUESTED:	\$500,000	TOTAL COST:	\$1,000,000

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

The Water for Irrigation, Streams and Economy (WISE) Project is conducting a Feasibility Study and Environmental Impact Statement (FS/EIS) to provide long term integrated water resource management in the Little Butte Creek and Bear Creek watersheds. Conservation alternatives that have been developed included replacing existing earthen canals with pipelines, using reclaimed effluent for irrigation and using conserved water to improve stream flows. The Little Butte Creek watershed provides prime Coho salmon spawning habitat for the Rogue River Basin, and the Bear Creek watershed is well known for its fruit and other agricultural products. The WISE Project Advisory Committee, with 19 members representing instream, agricultural, irrigation and municipal interests, is leading this effort, which includes public outreach beyond the requirements of the FS/EIS. This planning study is designed to gather and analyze the relevant data and information to develop the best possible product and provide all stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the project development and planning.

APPLICATION REVIEW TEAM EVALUATION:

The Application Review Team was very familiar with and supportive of the WISE Project. However, most of the funding request did not seem applicable to the feasibility study concept of this grant program, as it was associated with National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) that were geared more to the implementation phase of the project. Additionally, a great deal of work has already been done on water quality, especially temperature, and the instream flow needs of fish. Examples of these studies that were discussed included the Bear Creek Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study, the Bureau of Reclamation instream flow study, and Bureau of Reclamation studies associated with Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultation. The team agreed that additional information would be collected by the new studies, but that it would only incrementally add to the information already available. Given the limited funds that are available, the team had the greatest interest in funding the Water Distribution and On-Farm Irrigation Conservation task and the Stormwater Management Evaluation task (the irrigation ditches are used as part of the stormwater management system). Ultimately, however, due to limited funds, the team only recommended funding the Water Distribution and On-Farm Irrigation Conservation task.

The study is a priority for funding under SB 1069 because it is identified on the Department's statewide water assessment and inventory of potential conservation opportunities. The study could begin on or before January 1, 2009 and be completed by June 30, 2010.

Application Review Team Funding Recommendation: Do Fund: High Priority at \$30,000. Limit funding to the Water Distribution and On-Farm Irrigation Conservation task.

COMMENTS:

A letter of support for this application was received from Frances Oyung on behalf of Bear Creek Watershed Council. The Council supports the goals of WISE and has been a member of the Project Advisory Committee since the formation of the project. The Council believes that this project is critical to the future of water resource management in the watershed and supports the feasibility study and Environmental Impact Statement.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Do Fund at \$28,500. Limit funding to the Water Distribution and On-Farm Irrigation Conservation task.

The staff recommendation reflects a 5 percent across the board funding reduction on all studies.

Commission Action:

On December 5, 2008, the Water Resources Commission took action to:

“Release funding to all feasibility study applicants the Commission authorized at its’ November 20 meeting, at a level representing 95% of staff recommendations, and move forward with grant agreement negotiations and signatures.”

This feasibility study received an award amount of \$27,075.