

Streamlining State Agency Permitting for Removal/Fill Projects

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Formation of the Process Improvement Team

In response to concerns from the development community, and the findings of the Advisory Committee on Regulatory Permitting, the Office of Regulatory Streamlining initiated an intensive one-month evaluation of how water-related permits were processed for fill or removal projects. The team, which included representatives from the Dept. of State Lands, Dept. of Environmental Quality, Ore. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Water Resources Dept, and Dept. of Land Conservation & Development, recognized that development activities that affect Oregon's waters typically require multiple approvals before a project can start. These staggered approvals can require significant time and money for developers and have sometimes involved high consequence surprises and conflicting requirements.

Multiple Approvals Required

For a removal or fill project to be authorized in Oregon, approvals from DSL, DEQ, ODFW, WRD, and DLCD are often required. In addition, these projects may also require federal approval from the US Army Corps of Engineers. Each of these approvals has its own process and timeframes, and as a result, developers often do not know how to best design their projects to protect water resources and meet the requirements of all agencies.

Short-Term Improvements

The team identified a set of short-term improvements. These actions will:

- **Reduce paperwork, eliminate duplication and increase coordination:** connecting the state's process to the federal process so requirements are consistent, linking websites between agencies, creating a multi-agency web-based application, and providing a mechanism for applicants to call multiple agencies together to review a project will reduce the times a project is redesigned.
- **Increase certainty and timeliness for applicants:** using team approaches to project reviews, identifying criteria for evaluation of proposals, and producing a comprehensive guidance document will make it easier for applicants to know what they need to do to get a project approved.
- **Improve customer service:** develop checklists for common projects, train staff on customer service and on the requirements of other agencies to prepare staff to respond to applicant needs more completely.

Long-Term Vision

Long-term, the team envisions a consolidated permit system. An applicant would be able to obtain all state approvals associated with a project at one time. The consolidated permit system would look to applicants like one state permit for all water related activities connected to removal-fill projects. In addition, permit staff would assist applicants in working through the approval process and ensure resolution of any conflicts that arise.

Next Steps

The team will begin to implement the short-term recommendations immediately. During the 05-07 interim, the team will evaluate the need for legislative or budget changes to support the long-term vision and will make requests of the 2007 legislature as needed.

