



Staff Report

File #: 24-137

Version: 1

Date: 4/22/2024

Item #:

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Keith Stahley, City Manager

FROM: Brian D. Martin, PE, Public Works Director

SUBJECT:

Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Technical Assistance Grant Application for Fish Passage Barrier Prioritization Study.

Ward(s): 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8.

Councilor(s): Stapleton, Nishioka, Phillips, Gwyn, Hoy, Nordyke, Varney

Neighborhood(s): South Gateway, SEMCA, Morningside, Faye Wright, Sunnyslope, SWAN, SCAN, SESNA, NESCA, NEN, CAN-DO, Grant, West Salem

Result Area(s): Natural Environment Stewardship; Safe, Reliable and Efficient Infrastructure; Welcoming and Livable Community.

SUMMARY:

Substantial federal, state, and private funding opportunities exist for removal of fish passage barriers (e.g., undersized or perched culverts, historic diversions and dams, etc.) on streams that support native migratory and anadromous fish. Most of Salem's streams provide habitat for a variety of native fish, and Mill, Pringle, Glenn and Gibson Creeks are categorized as essential salmonid habitat by the Oregon Department of State Lands owing to their historic and continued role in providing habitat for federally protected spring Chinook and winter steelhead. Removal of fish passage barriers often overlaps with infrastructure capital improvement needs, resulting in highly fundable multi-benefit projects. However, current data related to fish passage barriers in Salem is outdated and incomplete, making it difficult to justify project need from the fish perspective and resulting in lower success rates for securing fish passage grants. An Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Open Solicitation Technical Assistance grant is being sought to address this issue.

ISSUE:

Shall City Council authorize the City Manager to apply for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Technical Assistance Grant and, if successful, enter into an agreement with OWEB to accept the grant funds?

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize the City Manager to apply for the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Technical Assistance Grant and, if successful, enter into an agreement with OWEB to accept the grant funds.

FACTS AND FINDINGS:

- OWEB's Open Solicitation grant program provides financial support to assist in safeguarding and restoring healthy watersheds and native habitats through a range of grant types, including Technical Assistance, Restoration, Land and Water Acquisition, Monitoring, Stakeholder Engagement, and Small Grants. For the current spring's Open Solicitation (Attachment 1), staff have prepared two grant applications seeking funding for different purposes: (1) a Technical Assistance grant for a fish passage study; and (2) a Restoration grant for ongoing projects in the Minto Island Conservation Area. These grants operate from separate funding pools and are assessed based on different criteria; thus, they are not in competition for funding. This report focuses on the Technical Assistance Grant for a fish passage barrier assessment and prioritization study.
- This project will utilize a systematic approach to prioritizing barriers for repair, replacement, or removal to achieve greater ecological gains and facilitate leveraging more funding for barrier removal associated with capital improvement projects. It will also provide a means for integrated fish habitat and passage considerations into capital improvement project planning. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to contribute to the restoration and preservation of healthy aquatic ecosystems in Salem's streams.
- The estimated project cost is \$165,000, and we are requesting an OWEB grant of up to \$150,000. The grant application requires a minimum match requirement of \$1; the City's application will include a match of up to \$15,000.
- Grant applications are due on April 29, 2024, and the funding decision are anticipated to be made in Fall 2024. If funded, the project will begin in Winter 2025.

BACKGROUND:

Salem has not conducted a comprehensive assessment of fish passage barriers in over twenty years. Since that time, significant urban growth, infrastructure development, and environmental changes have altered the landscape. Current knowledge of fish passage barriers is incomplete and comes from various sources, including staff observations, stormwater system inventories, and limited data from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW).

Without a recent, comprehensive assessment and prioritization, the City lacks current information

crucial for understanding the locations, extent, and severity of artificial fish passage impediments. This puts us at a disadvantage when applying for competitive funding through fish passage grant programs. To address this issue, staff propose applying for OWEB grant funding to contract with qualified fisheries biologists and hydrologists to conduct fish passage barrier assessments and prioritization in three key Salem watersheds: Glenn-Gibson, Mill Creek, and Pringle Creek (Attachment 2). These three watersheds are known to support native migratory and anadromous fish, including ESA listed spring Chinook and winter steelhead, making them high priority for enhancing fish passage and ideal candidates for fish passage funding opportunities.

If this project is successful, staff anticipate applying for additional grant funding to expand the study into additional watersheds.

Robert D. Chandler, PhD, PE
Assistance Public Works Director

Attachments:

1. OWEB Notice of Funding Opportunity
2. Fish Passage Study Focal Watersheds Map