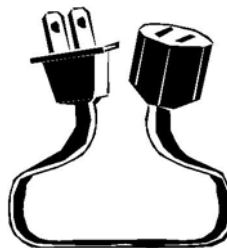


# TAKING A LOOK AT OREGON'S WATER...

## WHY IS WATER SO VALUABLE?

Water is essential to every kind of life on earth. Plants need water to grow, animals and people need water to drink.

Water is also very important to people for growing the food we eat and making nearly all the things that we use. Without water we would not have potato chips, or video games, or crayons, or blue jeans.



## WHERE DOES OUR WATER COME FROM?

The water we use begins in the form of rain or snow high in the mountains.

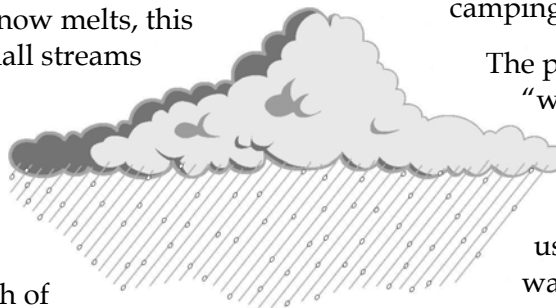
In the spring, when the snow melts, this water runs down into small streams that empty into larger rivers. This water travels to the ocean.

A lot of water also seeps into the ground into aquifers. Eventually much of this ground water seeps into rivers and goes out to sea.

Often we have to move water from the stream to use it in other places like farms and cities. We take water out of the stream using man-made devices called "diversions." We capture ground water by pumping it from wells.

## HOW DO WE SHARE OUR WATER?

There is a limited amount of water flowing in our rivers and underground. This water belongs to Oregon's citizens. We all share this water.



To share, the Water Resources Department requires people to get permission to use water. We don't require permission for all uses (like drinking water from a stream while you are on a camping trip).

The permission to use water is called a "water right." These water rights tell people how much water they can have, when they can use it, and where they can use it. It is very important that water users have permission.

## WHO MAY USE OREGON'S WATER?

Sometimes when it gets very dry, not everyone with a water right will have water. When this happens a "watermaster" divides up the water based on who was the first to get permission. The person with the oldest water right on a stream, lake, or aquifer is the first to get their water to use.

Many people in Oregon get their drinking water from cities. These cities have water rights to take water that they provide for you to drink from rivers and aquifers.

Other people drink water from their own wells. They may also use it for washing clothes and watering their gardens. This “domestic use” does not require a water right.

## HOW MANY PEOPLE SHARE THE WATER?

Right now, there are nearly 85,000 water rights in Oregon. Many other people use water from wells. There are approximately 300,000 wells counted in Oregon.

## WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is a geographic area that usually contains mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, lakes and flat land.

It is all the land area that a river drains. The watershed begins in the mountains and ends at the point that a stream or river dumps into a larger river from another watershed.



A watershed often has forests, grasslands, and wetlands in it.

## WHAT IS AN AQUIFER?

An aquifer is where water can be found underground. Can you imagine water coming from rocks? Actually, most water found in an aquifer is stored in small cracks and pockets in gravel and broken rocks. Sometimes aquifers are very close to the surface of the ground. Sometimes we have to drill very deep into the earth to find aquifers with large amounts of water.

The deepest water well in Oregon is more than 2,700 feet in the Grand Ronde Basin.

## HOW MANY LAKES DOES OREGON HAVE?

Oregon has both natural and man-made lakes. Many of the smaller, man-made lakes are actually ponds.

Oregon has 1,400 named lakes. The deepest lake in Oregon is Crater Lake at 1,932 feet. This is the deepest lake in the U.S.!

## HOW MANY RIVERS DOES OREGON HAVE?

Oregon has many different sizes of rivers and streams. Not all streams are big enough to be called rivers so we count the number of “stream miles.” That is how many miles of flowing water we have in Oregon.

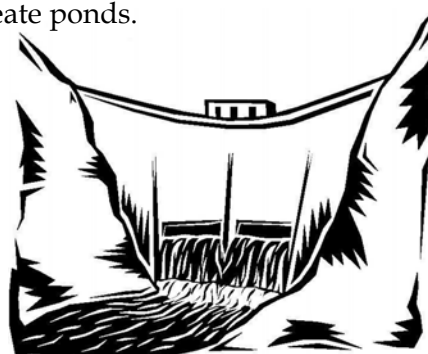
Oregon has 111,619 stream miles. That’s enough to go all the way around the Earth four and a half times!

Oregon’s longest river is the Willamette River at 309 miles. Oregon’s shortest river, the “D” River in Lincoln City, is the shortest river in the world.

## HOW MANY DAMS DOES OREGON HAVE?

Oregon has dams of many different sizes and uses. Some dams are for generating power and are very large. But most dams are quite small and are used to create ponds.

Oregon has 1,300 large dams that store water for many purposes. We have more than 10,000 small dams which make ponds for uses like waterfowl, livestock, and irrigation of crops.



The five tallest dams (over 400 feet tall) in Oregon are Cougar, Detroit, Round Butte, Owyhee, and Brownlee.



State of Oregon  
Water Resources Department  
725 Summer Street NE, Suite A  
Salem Oregon 97301-1266  
(503) 986-0900 [www.wrd.state.or.us](http://www.wrd.state.or.us)