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Oregon Water Resources Department Announces 2018 Stewardship and Conservation Award Winners

The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) announced the winners of its 2018 Stewardship and Conservation Awards at the Water Resources Commission Meeting held in Joseph, Oregon on September 6, 2018.

The Tyler Hansell Award for Efficiency in Agriculture was presented to Woody and Megan Wolfe, early adopters of conservation practices in Wallowa County, Oregon. The Wolfe family, The Freshwater Trust, Oregon Water Resources Department, and the Columbia Basin Water Transaction Program worked together to fund and implement a large-scale irrigation efficiency upgrade that converted 872 acres of land from flood irrigation to pivot irrigation. Ninety percent (90%) of the conserved water was allocated to the state and permanently transferred instream. The remaining ten percent (10%) of the conserved water was allocated to the Wolfe Family to irrigate 60 acres of previously dry land during the early irrigation season.

The award for Best Conservation Program – Large Municipalities and Water Suppliers that serve more than 1,000 – The City of Ashland and the City of Bend tied for the First Place Gold award; the City of Lake Oswego received the Second Place Silver award.

- The City of Ashland offers multiple water efficiency programs and resources to its customers. The City's popular the lawn replacement program provides a monetary incentive for removal of lawn-covered areas that are then replaced with drought-tolerant, more climate appropriate plants that require a lower amount of irrigation. Since the program's inception in 2014, the City has saved more than 7.5 million gallons of water annually.
- The City of Bend continues to operate its robust WaterWise Program, which includes such key elements as:
 - An educational programs for customers, K-12 students, and landscape contractors;
 - Web pages and publications promoting efficient water use inside and outside the home; and
 - A Sprinkler Inspection Program.

The City also subjected their original WaterWise program to a rigorous verification process by the Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE), an internationally recognized water conservation and efficiency organization. AWE compared Bend's programs to the newly created ANSI-AWWA-G480 Standard for Water Conservation Programs. The City was one of the first in the country to be reviewed and earned a "Silver rating". The City is using the results of this review and rating to improve their programs and plans to seek the AWE "Platinum rating" in the future.

- In 2007, the City of Lake Oswego’s annual average water consumption was about 170 gallons per capita per day (GPCD), and that number swelled to over 370 GPCD in the summer. Also at the time, the City’s water system was aging, undersized and in need of replacement. Peak daily summer demands were reaching and exceeding the existing capacity of the system, and the duration of these events was expanding. At-risk infrastructure, coupled with increases in demand, put the reliability of the City’s water treatment plant and its attached distribution system in question. In response, the City of Lake Oswego established three goals regarding the protection and stewardship of their drinking water supply:
 1. Adopt a water management and conservation program (WMCP);
 2. Adopt a water curtailment plan; and
 3. Develop and adopt a pricing structure (tiered water rates) for water that encourages conservation of water.

Since then, the City’s implementation of its WMCP, water curtailment plan, and water rates have reduced historic consumption and peak per-capita water demand by almost 20 percent (20%). Implementation of the conservation program also helped delay the timing of future water system expansions and reduce pressure on the current system.

The award for the Best Conservation Program – Commercial or Industrial was given to Central Oregon Irrigation District. The Central Oregon Irrigation District’s (COID) mission statement is to *“Provide reliable and efficient delivery of water to our patrons in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner with courtesy and integrity.”* Since 2000, COID has increased stream flows in the Deschutes Basin by nearly 39 cubic feet per second (cfs). One such example of their dedication to the environment is the Siphon Power Property Canal Piping Project which resulted in 5 cfs of water being returned to the Deschutes River, benefitting wildlife, fish and the river ecosystem.

“The Stewardship and Conservation Awards celebrate those making a meaningful difference in conserving one of Oregon’s most precious natural resources. Highlighting those setting a good example not only recognizes the role that water users, municipal water providers, and agricultural water suppliers play in balancing water demands with sustainability, but it also provides an avenue to share these innovative ideas and successes with the public at large.” says OWRD Director Tom Byler.

The Oregon Water Resources Department administers the Water Management and Conservation Plan (WMCP) program. WMCPs provide municipal and agricultural water suppliers an opportunity to develop a strategy for efficiently managing their water supplies to meet existing and future demands.