

# Institute for Natural Resources



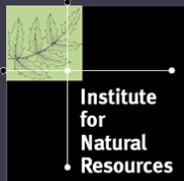
## Feature Story

### An Interview with Richard Whitman



**Richard Whitman**

*Governor's Natural Resources Policy Director*



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*Informing natural resource decision making through integrated knowledge and information.*

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by **Luca De Stefanis**, *INR Policy Research Intern. OSU Professional Masters' Program*

On a winter morning in February at the Oregon State Capital in Salem the bustling biennial legislative session is underway. I arrive at the capital to learn more about Governor John Kitzhaber's *10-Year Plan for Oregon*, focusing on the 'Healthy Environment' initiative. The plan lays the foundation for a sustainable future for Oregon communities, economy and the places Oregonians treasure through collaborative interagency efforts.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Richard Whitman, the Natural Resources Policy Director for the State of Oregon. Governor John Kitzhaber appointed the former Director of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development for his expertise in land use and environmental policy.

#### INTERVIEWER

The 2013-15 Governor's Balanced Budget marks a significant departure from previous biennial budgets. What makes this approach different from previous years?

#### RICHARD WHITMAN

This biennial budget is unique because it's focused on a long-term, outcomes-based approach that asks where we want to be in ten years and what we need to invest in. We are developing a long-term vision which is exhibited through the *10-Year Plan for Oregon Project – Healthy Environment Policy Vision*.

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INTERVIEWER

Oregon's natural resource programs receive less than one percent of the state's general fund revenues, yet involves an economic sector that generates almost 40 percent of Oregon's gross domestic product and value. How is the State of Oregon improving the funding environment for Oregon's natural resource programs?

WHITMAN

Natural resource programs have four main sources of revenue: the general fund, lottery fund, federal fund and 'other fund' (i.e. fees). In the general fund, the percentage allocated to natural resource programs has been in decline, but we have recently reversed this trend to stabilize it to a slight increase above one percent.

INTERVIEWER

You recently completed the *10-year Plan for Oregon*. The plan has five priorities that Oregonians have identified as critical to securing a prosperous future. A 'Healthy Environment' is one of them. How did you develop this plan?

WHITMAN

We put together a team of people who were not part of state agencies to survey professionals and get citizen input that really shaped and influenced the *10-year Plan*. For example, we learned water quality consistently ranks as the top environmental concern of Oregonians and the *10-year Plan* reflects that concern with focused attention on water quality improvements and water quantity supply.

INTERVIEWER

What new programs or service enhancements have been established to define and meet 'Healthy Environment' outcomes?

WHITMAN

Water supply ranks as a high priority to Oregonians. There is a greater focus on water resources development and setting up a framework to invest more

money in this area. In reference to water quality, we will expand the pesticide stewardship partnership program. Furthermore, we have a new program in response to legislation introduced by Senator Ron Wyden relating to federal forest policy in Eastern Oregon. This new program focuses on forest health collaboratives that will provide support for mill infrastructure, building local consensus around sales, stewardship contracting authority and long-term supplies. The emphasis is on supporting local collaborative efforts.

INTERVIEWER

Even though federal-level renewable energy portfolio standards are absent, Oregon has been very assertive in establishing state-level standards. What types of advances have been made in Oregon and what challenges exist?

WHITMAN

The utilities sector is on track to meeting our state's renewable energy portfolio standards. We are in the process of replacing energy generation sources that reflect a regional supply with the expected retirements of the Boardman, Oregon and Centralia, Washington coal-fired plants.

INTERVIEWER

What advancements have been made in coastal wind energy?

WHITMAN

We recently completed planning efforts. This involved identifying the best locations for development ensuring the least conflict with other users, such as fisheries. The areas we're looking at reflect the first three miles of ocean, which is under state jurisdiction. Beyond that point the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management is researching prospective coastal wind energy and the potential to dovetail efforts with the State of Oregon.