

Oregon Resilience Plan

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE JOINT HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON VETERANS AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

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Chair Boquist, Chair Mathews, and Committee Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss statewide resilience efforts in Oregon and to provide comments in support of the Oregon Resilience Plan.

I am here to request that you consider two key issues related to the Oregon Resilience Plan. First, success of the Oregon Resilience Plan will ultimately be measured locally. Thus, in order for the plan to succeed, state-level investments must be matched by similar investments made at the local level. Second, while the specter of a Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake and the devastating tsunami that will follow is the primary driver of the Oregon Resilience Plan, resilience is by definition, a multi-objective, all-hazard, all-threat endeavor. Therefore, strategies to improve Oregon's resilience to earthquakes must consider potential impacts from other hazards and threats.

Success of the Oregon Resilience Plan will be measured at the local level

Beginning in 2008, OPDR worked with Curry, Coos, Douglas and Lane counties to develop county-level disaster recovery plans. These were the first recovery plans to be developed for the southern Oregon coast. The process attracted representatives from a wide variety of disciplines and organizations.

It goes without saying that for many, participation fell into the category of "other duties as assigned." While local participants found the time to show up for meetings and provide invaluable insight and participation, when they left, most went back to jobs that did not include resilience or disaster recovery as core functions. More importantly, many local economic development professionals and business leaders chose not to participate. We heard things like, "Emergency management deals with disasters" or, "disaster planning is outside economic development's core focus area." In short, resilience and recovery planning was someone else's job.

While our efforts on the south coast are clearly documented in written plans, I am not able to report that local ownership and implementation of those plans has been achieved. I believe one of the main reasons is that many communities in Oregon simply lack the necessary human capital and technical expertise needed to manage and support local resilience activities. In order for our great state of Oregon

to be resilient to threats like a Cascadia subduction zone earthquake, state-level investments must be matched by complimentary investments at the local level.

Resilience is a multi-objective, all-hazard, all-threat endeavor

The Oregon Resilience Plan effectively demonstrates the interconnectedness of our various infrastructure sectors and the extent to which our state's economy is reliant on the provision of basic services: food, water, energy, roads, education, commerce, etc. Other speakers in prior hearings on this issue have effectively demonstrated the clear business case that supports many of the recommendations in the Oregon Resilience plan. That said, a Cascadia earthquake is not the only threat we face. True resilience requires the development of multi-objective strategies and solutions that address potential impacts from multiple threats.

As an example, OPDR is currently working with the Department of Land Conservation and Development and the Oregon Sea Grant program on a local resilience planning effort in Clatsop County. Communities in Clatsop County are most certainly at risk from earthquakes and tsunamis. But they also contend with coastal erosion, winter storms, periodic flooding, wildfires, landslides, etc. To develop resilience strategies that address any one of those hazards in isolation could overlook key vulnerabilities. Worse yet, money spent on projects that mitigate the danger posed by only one hazard run the risk of being wiped out by another.

Our project in Clatsop County is aimed at developing multi-objective, multi-hazard resilience plans. These plans will address not only the Cascadia earthquake and tsunami threat, but threats resulting from future climate uncertainties and other non-geologic hazards. State level resilience efforts should follow a similar model. Resilience can only be achieved if all hazards are considered and the strategies developed to mitigate risk achieve multiple objectives.

Conclusion

In summary, as you evaluate and implement the recommendations contained in the Oregon Resilience Plan, I encourage you to leverage state level investments with resources that increase capacity at the local level. I also encourage you to view resilience in Oregon as a multi-objective, all-hazard, all-threat endeavor.

On behalf of the Community Service Center and the University of Oregon, the Oregon Partnership for Disaster Resilience is happy to serve as one of many partners currently working toward achieving the vision of a strong and resilient state. Action on the recommendations contained in the Oregon Resilience Plan is an extremely important step in realizing that vision. I applaud the leadership each of you are showing through your careful consideration of this issue.

Thank you for your attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.