

February 2019 Talking Points

ECONorthwest Report: Economic Importance of Water in the North Santiam

On February 19, 2019, the North Santiam Watershed Council presented ECONorthwest's final report and discussion on the Importance of Water in the North Santiam Basin: An Economic Description. The event took place at the Marion County Public Works Building at 5155 Silverton Rd. NE, Salem, Oregon.

This report was sponsored by Oregon Business Council, Meyer Memorial Trust, Ford Family Foundation, Marion Soil & Water Conservation District, Marion County, City of Salem and the North Santiam Watershed Council.

Sarah Reich the lead author from ECONorthwest, provided an overview of the report and took questions from the audience while Marion County Economic Development Coordinator, Tom Hogue, facilitated discussion around how the report may assist various organizations, governments and water-dependent industries make the business case for investment in the North Santiam Watershed water quality, quantity and timing.

Report highlights:

- The largest North Santiam Watershed industry user of water is from correctional facilities.
- The report notes there is a \$42 annual value to residential users to mitigate water curtailment. This is above and beyond what is already paid for water.
- Over 500,000 recreational visits occur in the North Santiam watershed per year at an average of \$73 per visit above what people spend on travel, gear, etc. This equates to \$36.5 million annually in economic activity.
- The visitor demand to the North Santiam Watershed directly correlates with reservoir levels: 1ft drop at the Detroit Reservoir equals a 2 percent decline in visitation to the region.
- The report notes that traditionally unirrigated crops are transitioning to irrigated crops either through the planting of premium crops to maintain economic viability or due to changes in weather patterns that modifies traditional growing seasons.
- Finally, the distribution of benefits and costs are uneven: beneficiaries aren't necessarily bearing the costs of water management, mitigation, protection and conservation efforts.

Audience participation:

The audience consisted of the Marion County Commissioners, municipal public works staff, federal agency project managers, irrigation districts, watershed leadership, economic development professionals and locally engaged North Santiam watershed residents.

Discussion around the report and potential future actions included:

- The estimated economic valuation builds a solid case for federal, state and basin-wide investment, coalition-building and policy making.
- Conservation measures alone will not resolve this future water availability issue. Recent concerns that conservation drip irrigation projects are not allowing for aquifer recharging.
- Policy discussions are happening on a local, state and federal levels and the time is ripe to prioritize necessary water actions and projects.
- Concerns rose about environmental equity that comes from and the cost burdens on small rural communities to protect water assets for beneficiaries outside of watershed.
- Desire for proactive local water ecosystem coalition and leadership from among various regional water dependent industries, municipalities, water managers and watersheds to unite, prioritize and mitigate future water availability issues.

Please see the link below for the full **ECONorthwest Report: Economic Importance of Water in the North Santiam**.

[Economic Importance of Water in NSW FINAL 2019](http://northsantiam.org/wp-content/uploads/Economic-Importance-of-Water-in-NSW_FINAL_2019.pdf)

or at

http://northsantiam.org/wp-content/uploads/Economic-Importance-of-Water-in-NSW_FINAL_2019.pdf