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# Water Resources Department Records Guide Scope and Content

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The records of the Water Resources Department, 1852-2000, document the activities of the department in developing and managing the water resources of the state of Oregon. Except for several photographs and maps that date Return to 1852, most records were created in the twentieth century. The records consist of correspondence, reports and hearing transcripts, meeting minutes and agendas, land records, land and water surveys, maps, and photographs.

From 1900 to the 1930s, the predecessors to the Water Resources Department were mainly involved with the reclamation of semi-arid land in central and eastern Oregon. To fulfill the requirements of the federal Carey Land Act, irrigation companies began to construct irrigation canals and ditches to provide water to farmers in arid areas east of the Cascade Mountains. Because many of these early reclamation and irrigation projects were poorly managed resulting in contracts to furnish water to settlers far exceeding the available water supply, the state became involved in the projects. The state's involvement with one of these projects, the Columbia Southern Irrigating Company, is well documented. In addition, the Columbia Southern and other irrigation projects are well documented in the Arid Land Record, Certificates of Proof, Desert Land Board Reclamation Records, Desert Land Board Records, and Survey Record Books. The records of the Irrigation and Drainage Securities Commission and Reclamation Commission further document government activities in overseeing contracts of the irrigation districts.

Beginning in the 1930s, the Water Resources Department became involved in hydroelectric projects as local governments and commercial companies sought permission to construct dams, appropriate water, and form utility districts in order to furnish electric power. These activities are well documents by the Hydroelectric Project Records, Hydroelectric Commission Peoples' Utility District Records, and Hydroelectric Commission Minutes.

Two river basin commissions, the Upper Columbia River Basin Commission and the Willamette River Basin Commission, were formed to manage water resources in northeast Oregon and in the Willamette Valley. Both commissions were concerned with dams and reservoirs, irrigation and hydroelectric power, flood control, and erosion prevention. The Willamette River Basin Commission Records are nicely supplemented by the Photographs series. The photographs document the construction of dams and reservoirs that were commission projects. They also show floods, flood damage, erosion of river banks and fields, and projects to improve river

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banks throughout the Willamette Valley. Detailed descriptions of these photographs are in the "Photograph Descriptions" section of this guide.

The administrative activities of the Water Resources Department and its predecessors are documented by records (correspondence, reports, meeting minutes, and hearing transcripts) which consist primarily of communications between the boards or committees which set water policy and the department director who was charged with carrying out the state's water policy. These activities are documented in the Water Resources Board Records, Water Resources Board Minutes, Water Resources Board Member (Emery N. Castle) Records, Water Policy Review Board Records, and the Water Resources Committee Records.

The Maps series consists of two collections of maps that contain a wealth of information. One set of maps was produced by the Oregon Highway Department and depicts the sites of proposed state parks and recreation areas. The other set of maps was produced by the U.S. General Land Office and contains maps dating Return to 1852. These survey plats cover four sections south from the Columbia River and fifteen sections east to west from The Dalles to the Pacific Ocean. The surveys show both natural features (rivers, mountains, vegetation) and man-made features (trails, roads, townsites, building, and land ownership), including early town plats of Portland, Oregon City, and The Dalles. Detailed descriptions of these maps are in the "Map Descriptions" section of this guide.

The Publications series contains published reports that document department activities that are not covered in other series in this accession. Significant publications are the drainage basin reports covering major river basins in Oregon and dated 1950s and 1960s; ground water reports dated 1960s to 1980s; and a study of the long-range water needs of the state published in 1969 and covering the major river basins in the state. The series also includes many annual and biennial reports generated by the Water Resources Department.

Many maps, photographs, and oversize volumes have been removed from individual series (e.g., Willamette River Basin Commission Records, etc.). These are described in detail in the separated records sections in the back of this guide.

The total size of the record group is over 130 cubic feet.

The accession number for most of the Water Resources Department records is 92A-6. The records were originally accessioned into the Archives under accession numbers 60A-64, 61-59, 68A-13/1,2,3, 75A-86, 77A-157/1, 87A-57, 88A-22, 88A-27, 91A-27, and 92A-6. Additional accessions include 93A-011, 2000B-025, 2001A-022, 2003A-038, and 2003A-048.

**Note:** Current Water Resources Department programs and records are described in a records retention schedule produced by the Oregon State Archives.

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