

AGENDA ITEM FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING

( ) Discussion only

( X ) Action

FROM (DEPT/ DIVISION): Douglas R. Olsen  
County Counsel

SUBJECT: Board Payable

Background: A payable is before the Board for approval due to the amount. The payment is for the Northeast Oregon Water Association dues.	Requested Action: Approve payable to Northeast Oregon Water Association in the amount of \$23,500
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ATTACHMENTS: Payable

\*\*\*\*\*For Internal Use Only\*\*\*\*\*

Checkoffs:

- ( ) Dept. Head (copy)
- ( ) Budget (copy)
- ( ) Fiscal
- ( X ) Legal (copy)
- ( ) (Other - List:)

To be notified of Meeting:

Needed at Meeting:

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Scheduled for meeting on: October 1, 2025

Action taken:







**Via Electronic and/or Standard Mail**

August 25, 2025

To: NOWA Members  
From: J.R. Cook, NOWA Director

**RE: 2025/2026 Membership (Renewal and Update)**

Dear NOWA Members:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, our NOWA team and our region I want to extend a heart-felt thank you for over a decade of support. As you are aware, the politics around natural resources in our state and, specifically, our region continue to become more complex and expensive to navigate. As a results driven organization for the entire region, these complexities are often compounded by the fact that what works for one segment of our membership may indirectly or directly impact another segment. This requires patient, methodical engagement at the local level and in Salem.

NOWA continues to grow in its importance to the region not only due to our unrelenting efforts to finish a multi-generational water sustainability agenda, but also in our advocacy for the symbiotic relationship between our urban/industrial land base and ag land base in pursuit of minimized net ecological impact and sustainable growth. The relationships that our organization has built with legislative leadership and with the multitude of NGO organizations that work directly or indirectly on water quantity and quality policies is a growing asset to all citizens of the Mid-Columbia region of Oregon. Our results and our relationships continue to enable NOWA and its members to access key decision makers to either amend problematic bills or push forward region specific policies critical to our sustainability needs.

The 2025 Legislative Session was one of the most difficult sessions to date for NOWA. As a results-based organization focused on regional solutions, this session felt like a step backwards for us as we had to react to many statewide bills with very negative unintended consequences to our efforts and our members. Poorly written, unvetted bills designed to impact or benefit certain regions or areas of Oregon would have had significant unintended consequences for our cities, ports, districts and private water rights holders should we not have had the level of involvement of the NOWA team. NOWA expended more resources in the first 2 months of the legislative session in 2025 than we have expended in the previous three sessions combined. While 2025 was a step back in policy efforts, it was a step forward in organization and goal setting at the local level. We have assembled one of the strongest teams in Oregon to tackle any upcoming challenges but, more importantly, to also move our proactive agenda forward. We appreciate your continued support in keeping this team operational.



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**PHONE** 541.969.8026

The fiscal year for NOWA runs from August 1 to July 31 of each year. Prior to the end of the 2025 fiscal year, the NOWA Board of Directors voted to increase general membership dues to \$2,500 per year. This is the first membership rate increase in over 10 years of operation and was not approached lightly by the Board. The increase is necessary to not only cover the increasing costs of basic NOWA services but to deal with the scope of specialists NOWA must contract with to counter negative policy campaigns against our region and better inform policy makers of the benefits of our permanent solutions.

### **In Pursuit of Finality**

NOWA has quietly been completing the first of five critical benchmarks needed for water sustainability. By the end of 2025, the final regional pipeline will be completed. At that point, the region will be able to convey enough Columbia River water into the irreplaceable high-value agricultural region to sustain and enhance our agricultural output while simultaneously taking pressures off potable basalt aquifers and over-appropriated streams. Our efforts to certificate municipal water rights, the multi-use function of the developed infrastructure, our recharge testing efforts and our basalt groundwater savings efforts not only help the feed stock base (i.e. agricultural base) for the municipalities and port districts but also ensure water sustainability opportunities for municipal and industrial growth, drought resilience and ecological health. This symbiotic relationship and multi-purpose nature of NOWA's goals are unheard of in Oregon and years ahead of most regions in the state.

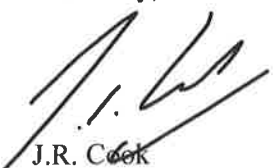
In addition to developing the necessary infrastructure, NOWA has been working closely with the Oregon Governor's Office, State Legislature, our Senate and Congressional delegation and interested parties to formulate a final list of deliverables to realize a permanent pathway towards sustainability and resiliency. These deliverables include:

- 1) Securing no less than 150,000 acre-feet of mainstem Columbia River water to fill pipes permanently and meet Oregon permit requirements for certification
- 2) Developing state policy to reset participating public water supply districts into one management boundary and one administrative structure (we call this effort "color of water")
- 3) Developing a biologically defensible accounting method for mitigation water that focuses on volume and fish flow timing rather than the State safe harbor of "bucket for bucket time and place."
- 4) Identifying mechanisms to save groundwater, recharge aquifers and account for savings.

NOWA's team of professionals have reached milestones never thought achievable for our region. We have done so in a quiet fashion and in a manner that focuses on results not newspaper headlines. We are proud of our achievements to date and looking forward to another year of progress on water quality and quantity solutions. Should your organization wish to have an in-person presentation of NOWA's goals, efforts to date, progress and pathways to success please reach out to us at [jrcook@northeastoregonwater.org](mailto:jrcook@northeastoregonwater.org) to schedule a presentation.

Please look at your in-box for quarterly update meetings and for our annual meeting which occurs in January. Thank you very much for your continuing support of the NOWA efforts.

Sincerely,



J.R. Cook

Executive Director

Attachment: 2024/2025 Membership Invoice