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# Seal Rock Water District

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The following information is being provided by the district out of a desire to share with our customers and the community the district's position with respect to our obligations and responsibilities in protecting the district's drinking water system from pollutants and the application of herbicides/pesticides in the Beaver Creek watershed.

In the pursuit of positive societal change, the collaboration between community engagement and state agencies stands as a formidable force capable of advancing progress and addressing pressing issues. Well-organized, structured, and respectful social engagement, driven by passion and a desire for change, often brings to light critical problems and advocates for reform. On the other hand, public servants, deeply rooted within established governmental structures, possess the tools, resources, and regulatory authority to manage and protect systems. When these two groups work effectively within appropriate channels, social engagement can serve as a catalyst for change, raising public awareness and pushing for new policies, while public servants can harness their institutional power to translate these aspirations and serve as an advocate for tangible reforms.

## **Public Servant: Bound by Regulations:**

Public servants are individuals employed by government agencies or organizations tasked with delivering public services and implementing government policies. They play a vital role in upholding the rule of law, ensuring the efficient functioning of government, and safeguarding the public interest. Key characteristics of public servants include:

- **Obligation to Regulations:** Public servants are bound by established regulations, laws, and government policies. Their actions must conform to existing legal frameworks, and they are responsible for implementing policies rather than challenging them.
- **Service to the Public:** Their primary responsibility is to serve the public interest, often by providing essential services, enforcing laws, and managing public resources.
- **Neutrality:** Public servants are expected to remain politically neutral and objective in their duties, regardless of their personal beliefs or opinions.
- **Accountability:** They are accountable to higher authorities, such as government officials, for their actions and decisions, and their performance is often evaluated based on adherence to established rules and regulations.

## **Social Engagement or Activism: Challenging Existing Regulations:**

Social engagement, on the other hand, are individuals or groups who advocate for social, political, or environmental change. They often work outside the framework of established regulations and policies to challenge norms and seek reforms. Key characteristics of Social Engagement Groups include:

- **Challenge to the Status Quo:** Social Engagement Groups actively challenge existing regulations and policies that they perceive as unjust, discriminatory, or harmful. They may engage in protests, and advocacy campaigns to drive change.

- **Advocacy for Change:** Social Engagement Groups advocate for specific causes or issues, such as civil rights, environmental conservation, or social justice, with the aim of bringing about reforms and raising public awareness.
- **Passion and Conviction:** Social Engagement Groups are often driven by a deep passion for their cause and a strong conviction that change is necessary. They may be less concerned with political neutrality and more focused on the moral or ethical imperative of their actions.
- **Engagement with the Public:** Social Engagement Groups seek to mobilize public support and create movements around their causes. They often engage in public discourse, education, and outreach to build a constituency for change.

### **Advocacy vs. Social Engagement Groups:**

While advocacy and social engagement groups share common goals of promoting change and raising awareness, they differ in their approach and relationship with established regulations:

**Approach to Regulations:** Advocacy works within existing regulations and institutions to influence policy decisions and reforms. Social Engagement Groups challenge regulations and institutions to bring about change from outside the established system.

**Method of Engagement:** Advocacy often involves negotiation, lobbying, and working with policymakers to effect change. Social Engagement Groups can employ more direct and confrontational methods, such as protests or demonstrations.

**Level of Engagement:** Advocacy can be undertaken by individuals, organizations, or even public servants in their personal capacity. Social Engagement Groups often require a more committed and passionate involvement, often on a grassroots level.

**Relationship with Regulations:** Advocacy seeks to modify or reform existing regulations to align them with desired outcomes. Social Engagement Groups may seek to disrupt and challenge regulations deemed oppressive, dangerous, or unjust.

Public servants and Social Engagement Groups represent two distinct roles in society, each with its own set of responsibilities, constraints, and approaches. Public servants uphold established regulations and work within existing systems to serve the public interest, while Social Engagement Groups challenge these regulations to advocate for change. While both advocacy and social engagement are essential for a healthy democracy and social progress, their differences lie in their methods, objectives, and their positions in relation to the established order. Balancing the roles of public servants and social engagement is vital to maintaining a dynamic and responsive society that respects the rule of law while pursuing meaningful change.

### **Oregon Forest Practices Act:**

The Oregon Forest Practices Act (OFPA) is a set of state regulations that governs how private forestlands are managed in Oregon. It was established to strike a balance between the economic interests of the timber industry and the protection of Oregon's natural resources, including its watersheds. The legal power of the OFPA is significant, as it outlines the specific rules and requirements that private forestland owners and operators must follow when conducting logging and forest management activities. These regulations encompass a wide range of aspects, such as logging methods, stream buffers, reforestation, and pesticide use.

To protect watersheds from chemicals and collaborate with state agencies to challenge the OFPA, Social Engagement Groups can employ several strategies:



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**Advocacy and Public Awareness:** Social Engagement Groups can raise public awareness about the potential environmental and health risks associated with the use of chemicals in forest practices. This awareness can garner public support for stricter regulations and prompt public servants to reconsider or amend the OFPA.

**Legislative Engagement:** Social Engagement Groups can work with lawmakers at the state level to propose and advocate for changes to the OFPA. This may involve drafting new legislation or amendments to existing laws to address specific concerns related to chemical use and watersheds.

**Lobbying and Advocacy Groups:** Social Engagement Groups can form or join advocacy groups focused on environmental conservation and sustainable forestry. These groups can engage in lobbying efforts, putting pressure on public servants and lawmakers to revise the OFPA in favor of stronger watershed protections.

**Litigation:** In cases where public servants lack the authority to make changes to the OFPA, Social Engagement Groups can consider legal action. This might involve filing lawsuits to challenge specific provisions of the OFPA that allow chemical use near watersheds, arguing that they violate environmental laws or regulations.

**Scientific Research and Data Collection:** Social Engagement Groups can collaborate with scientists and researchers to gather data and conduct studies on the environmental impact of chemical use in forest practices. Scientific evidence can be a powerful tool in persuading public servants to reconsider the regulations in place.

**Community Engagement:** Social Engagement Groups can engage with local communities living near forested areas to build grassroots support for watershed protection efforts. Local communities often have a vested interest in clean and safe water sources.

**Collaboration with Environmental Agencies:** Social Engagement Groups can work in partnership with state environmental agencies responsible for overseeing forest practices. By providing these agencies with evidence and public support for stricter regulations, Social Engagement Groups can encourage these agencies to revise their guidelines and enforcement efforts.

**Engaging in Public Comment Periods:** State agencies and the Legislature often seek public input during the rulemaking process. Social Engagement Groups can participate in public comment periods to voice their concerns and propose changes to the OFPA related to chemical use and watershed protection.

By employing these strategies and working collaboratively with state agencies, Social Engagement Groups can challenge the existing regulations of the Oregon Forest Practices Act and advocate for stronger measures to protect watersheds from the potential adverse effects of chemical use in forestry practices. The goal is to find common ground that balances economic interests with environmental sustainability and the long-term health of Oregon's natural resources.

Respectfully,

Seal Rock Water District