



Role of Oman Water Society in water resources conservation

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ABSTRACT

Oman Water Society (OWS) is a non-profitable non-governmental organization (NGO) found by professionals working in both the government and private sectors who are involved in the water management, water supply, and water projects. OWS was an official launch on April 14, 2010. The society aims to establish a platform for professionals with interest in water to exchanging ideas, researches, discuss challenges, enhancing their knowledge and expose themselves to the latest technology in the field. It is to the interest of the country as well as the Water Sector to have all (stakeholders) or at least most of the professionals working in the water and wastewater field in this society. Being an NGO, Oman Water Society (OWS) is becoming the focal point for all water-related issues to be discussed. Local, regional as well as International organizations are participating in events organized by the Society. Oman Water Society organized a series of seminars conducted by experts in the water sector. It has also organized several workshops in water-related issues and training programs to the young engineers in the on-going projects by coordination with the consultants and contractors working the water projects. The society is encouraging all interested parties to participate in the above-mentioned events. In addition to that, the public sector very well addresses to take part in such activities although for non-members. Country related topics are given priority in delivering the water seminars and events. For instance cyclones, climate changes, groundwater, desalination, agricultural development and other new water resources te innovations. OWS believes such related topics will not only encourage professionals to participate but also the other stakeholders (i.e., public, farmers, etc.). Moreover, young professionals are considered to be an available source to increase the number of associates within the society. Therefore, OWS is focusing on such new/young professionals by introducing society to them. The society is offering them associates membership until they obtain the full membership after their graduation. Oman Water Society is working hard to achieve its goals by approaching specialists in the concerned public and private sectors. As well, it is looking forward to connecting with all segments of society in order to create a link between all partners concerned with the water sector, whether they are from the water consumers or decision makers. The OWS is doing this in order to intensify efforts in all aspects of water resources and its preservation. The venues of most of the symposiums and seminars organized by OWS are selected at the governorate where particular water-related problem or challenges in order to have all concerned stakeholders including the general public. As a result of these efforts, it has been possible to tackle many water-related challenges and come up with good recommendations. Furthermore, good networking is taking place during the OWS events, which are playing a role in setting goals for water management and conservation in the country.

Keywords: Oman Water Society (OWS); Water conservation; Public participation

1. Introduction

The Oman Water Society was established on 29th Rabi' al Thani 1431 (14th April 2010), thus becoming the first Omani society in the Sultanate to specialize in water and the second in the Arabian Gulf. It has a range of goals designed to promote water-related concepts. Its vision for the future includes studies and research that will help develop local

potential, provide expertise for Omani nationals and improve proficiency and performance levels in areas that are of interest to the society (OWS Website, 2018). The society setup the following goals:

- The OWS is contributing to the country's development in collaboration with the competent authorities.

- Encouraging scientific research, studies and training programs and developing the local potential in the various water sciences-related fields.
- The society is collaborating with universities and scientific research centers.
- It is also fostering co-operation between bodies, institutions, and individuals involved in the water sector.
- Encouraging and providing studies, data and statistics on water-related matters and publishing them in the media.
- Helping to promote awareness about rationalizing water consumption and making the best possible use of available water resources.
- Working with the competent authorities to draw up and develop the best possible specifications and standards for the water sector.
- Collaborating with the competent authorities to conserve ground and surface water stocks from depletion and pollution.
- Encouraging the use of scientific methods for developing water sources such as desalination, wastewater treatment, and recycling.
- Providing technical, scientific, economic and legal consultation services on water-related matters to such bodies as request it.

2. Benefits of membership

The members who will join the society will enjoy the following benefits:

- Members can be represented on committees set up by the Council for various purposes such as organizing lectures, events, and scientific and recreational field visits.
- Active members are appointed to represent the Society at conferences, symposiums, and exhibitions at home and abroad.
- Support is provided for member participation in conferences, seminars, workshops, and other activities. Members have access to study grants and training courses.
- Members can improve their cultural and scientific/academic standards by attending lectures and seminars organized by the society.
- Members can benefit from facilities and [price] reductions obtained by the society in international forums.
- Members and participants can exchange ideas and information.
- There are opportunities for contacts and interaction between experts and participants.
- Through ongoing co-operation and coordination, there are opportunities for members to deal with problems

OMAN WATER SOCIETY BOARD

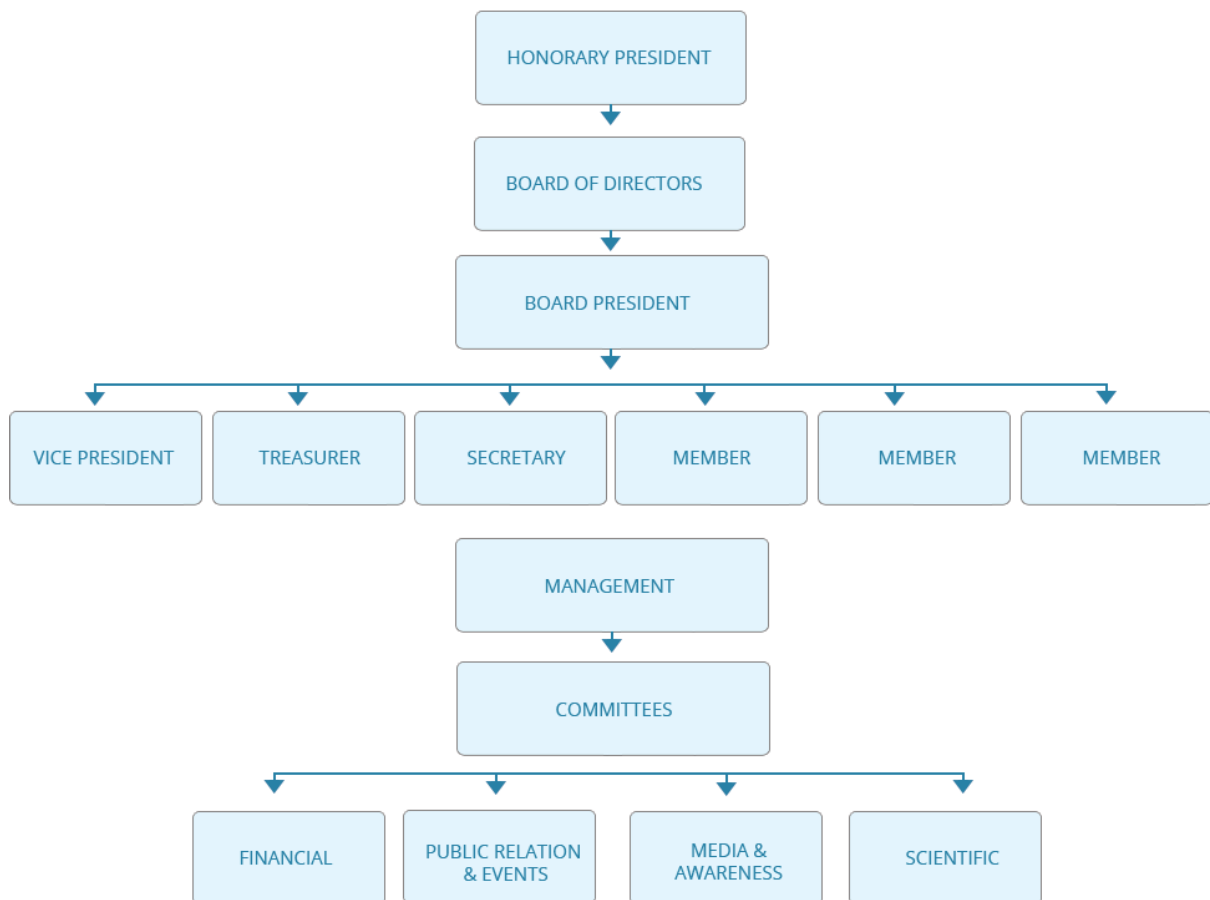


Fig. 1. Organization chart of the Oman Water Society.



Fig. 2. OWS film water in the leader's vision.



Fig. 3. OWS symposium brochures.

and benefit from the expertise available among the membership.

- Members have access to the latest water technology.
- The society organizes study groups and seminars for the benefit of its members.
- The society enjoys contacts and interaction with other relevant societies and bodies.
- The society provides a platform for consultation on water science-related issues.

3. Organizational chart

The Board of Directors constitutes the executive authority of the society. It must implement the society's bylaws together with the resolutions and directives approved by its ordinary and extraordinary general meetings and to make recommendations and take decisions by the society's objectives provided that these are also within the Board of Directors' competences.

According to Article (24) of a bylaw of the society: The Board of Directors shall be composed of seven members of the society who have active members who shall be elected by the general meeting for a term of two years, subject to renewal. The following organizational chart represents the society set up.

4. Society activities

Since its official launch, the society has worked very hard and accomplished many activities to achieve its objectives. Summary of how the OWS operates are listed below:

- Through the implementation of symposiums and workshops in the Sultanate's multiple governorates, by the end of 2018, 14 symposia were completed.
- Launching of specialized awareness campaigns (schools, farmers and universities).
- Participation in festivals, scientific and commercial exhibitions.
- Participation in local and international conferences.
- Participation in government committees and specialized working groups (e.g., agriculture and mining strategy and Oman Vision 2040).
- Production of documentaries and cultural films (e.g., water in the leader's vision and film on man and water).



5. OWS symposiums

The Oman Water Society organized 14 symposiums distributed to all governorates of the Sultanate. These symposiums were attended by more than 2,000 participants from all water stakeholders where very important water issues were addressed. The symposiums are listed below:

- First Cyclone Symposium on Tropical Cyclones (Preparedness and Risk Reduction held in Muscat on 21st June 2011.
- Second Cyclone Symposium on Tropical Cyclones (Tropical Cyclones and its effects on Community) held in Sur on 6th June 2012.
- Symposium of Fog Collection held in Salalah on 24th September 2012.
- Water Resources in Musandam (Challenges and Solutions) held in Khasab, Musandam Governorate on 2nd to 3rd March 2013.
- Third Cyclone Symposium on Tropical Cyclones (Hand-in-hand to reduce the risk of tropical cyclones, what is my role? Held in Muscat on 5th June 2013.
- Water for Sustainable Tourism Industry held in Nizwa on 23rd to 24th September 2013.
- Produced Water in Sustainable Development Plans of Al Wusta Governorate held at Duqm, on 9th to 10th December 2013.
- Industrial Waste Water Treatment (Challenges and Re-use) held at Sohar on 1st to 2nd December 2014.
- Aflaj, Cultural Heritage and Development Necessity held at Ibra on 8th–9th June 2015.
- Best Practices and its impacts on Water Resources Sustainability held at Ibri on 25th to 26th January 2016.
- Offshore springs in Sultanate of Oman held at Quryat on 7th to 8th November 2016.
- Sustainable Water Management in Fragile Mountain Ecosystems held in Jabel Al Akhdhar on 12th to 13th April, 2017.
- Small Desalination Units for Agricultural Sustainability (Challenges and Opportunities) held at Barka on 5th to March, 2018.
- The fourth Workshop on Tropical Cyclones and Flash Floods (Evaluation of the Sultanate's Experience and Lessons Learned after Guno and Phet Cyclones).



Fig. 4. Awareness campaigns for students.



Fig. 5. Lectures delivered to farmers by one of the OWS members.



Fig. 6. Partnership with Sultan Qaboos University in Research Projects.

6. Awareness programs

The society continuously is arranging and organizing lectures by professionals on all related water issues. The lectures are delivered in schools, universities, Oman Women Associations and all other public gathering (Al Sulaiman, 2018). The members of the society would deliver these lectures and in some occasions experts and officials from government and non-government organizations are invited to deliver the lectures on behalf of the OWS.

Agriculture in Oman is the major consumption of the water resources, therefore it is very important to involve the farmers in conservation of the water resources of the country. The OWS arranges lectures especially to the farmers.

7. Research and innovation support

The Oman Water Society has recognised the importance of research and scientific innovations related to water and hence supported as much as it could the especially the young scientists and help them to accomplish their ambitions.

8. Participation in conferences

The participation in international events is very important for the exchange of experiences and the transfer of technology. Therefore, the society seeks to support the participation of its members and to submit papers in the conference and also participation in exhibitions.



Fig. 7. Meeting with researchers at the OWS premises.



Fig. 8. Innovation initiative and supporting the innovators.



Fig. 9. OWS members participation in the international events.

9. Water champions initiative

OWS offered an initiative to raise awareness among students about the importance of water and its conservation by making groups of students in schools and teaching them how to become champions water (OWS, 2015). The Champion of Water is any girl or boy of all ages who dedicate their efforts to protect water sources that we have. They should know all that is relevant to water preservation and share that knowledge with others. Despite their gender or age, they are all participants in the one thing that they are committed to water sources preservations. The initiative also targets the administrative and teaching staff and supervisors who will oversee the implementation of the field plan for the initiative as well as observers of the initiative the following year and students' parents. Necessary approvals have been taken and now securing the budget needed to start the project, where the search for financial support for the project.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

Conservation of the country water resources and involve all the stakeholders have always been a concern for the society and its members. Within a short time since its establishment in 2010, Oman water society has achieved most of its goals and developed its business plan in a very systematic approach. The plan addressed the short-, medium- and long-term requirements as seen fit by the society board. OWS at its short-term plan has already delivered the following:

- Organized a series of seminars and workshops that were conducted by experts and invited speakers from within Oman and also abroad in the Water Sector.
- Conducted training programs to the young engineers in the on-going projects by coordination with the consultants and contractors working the Water projects.

- The society encouraged all interested parties to participate in the above-mentioned events. Public sector such as farmers and school students are very well addressed and have been encouraged to take part in such activities although for non-members.
- Country-related topics have taken priority in delivering water seminars and events. For instance cyclones, climate changes, groundwater, desalinization, agricultural development, etc. OWS believes such related topics will not only encourage professionals to participate but also the other stakeholders (i.e., public, farmers, etc.).
- Young professionals have always been an available source to increase the number of associates within the society. Therefore, OWS has been targeting such new/young professionals by introducing society to them. The society offered them associates membership until they obtain the full membership after their graduation.

It is recommended that the OWS continues its efforts on its short- and long-term as mentioned above. It should also encourage the public especially those who have water expertise, as well as water users to join the society. The members of society enjoy many benefits and therefore these should be further extended to encourage the member to be very active in the society activities in the future. Public participation and capacity building has proved to be a very effective way of water resources conservation; it is recommended that OWS extends its efforts to all the water stakeholders.

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