



Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership Meeting

Date: October 22, 2024, 12 PM – 3 PM

Location: City Council Chambers, Lincoln City, Oregon and Zoom

Conveners: Seal Rock Water District, represented by Adam Denlinger

Project Team: Suzanne de Szoeki and Leah Cogan of GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

Meeting Participants

In person:

Adam Denlinger – Seal Rock Water District

Alan Fujishin – Gibson Farms

Alyssa Mucken – Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD)

Billie Jo Smith – Lincoln County Water Systems Alliance

Bradley Wynn – Seal Rock Water District

Caylin Barter – Wild Salmon Center

Christine Clapp – Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)

Penelope Kaczmarek – Lincoln County Water Systems Alliance

Shane Cossel – DEQ

Stephanie Reid – Lincoln City

Jan Kaplan – City of Newport

Phebe Howe – Oregon Health Authority

Steve Parrett – Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Suzanne de Szoeki – GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

Tyler Clouse – Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Online:

David Rupp – Oregon State University

Evan Hayduk – MidCoast Watersheds Council

Janna Guzman – Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Jennifer Beathe – Starker Forests

Laura Johnson – Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Leah Cogan – GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

Lili Prael – Oregon Water Resources Department

Meghna Babbar-Sebens – Oregon State University

Steve Stewart – City of Newport

Meeting Recording Timestamps

00:00 Opening remarks & participant introductions

11:59 Proposed Charter updates

21:40 Draft Early Implementation Work Plan

1:08:56 Enabling One Water Security for Climate-Ready Communities

1:43:48 Place-based Planning Rulemaking

1:55:57 Participant project sharing

2:00:46 Committee and Work Group updates

2:24:53 Thinking ahead about the Partnership

3:02:53 Open comment time, appreciations, and final remarks

Consensus decision on Charter updates

- Suzanne provided an overview of the Charter update process and proposed revisions, which are focused on moving the Partnership from planning to implementation, improving clarity, providing more detailed descriptions of the structure and roles of the Partnership and its subgroups, and refining the decision-making process. She also described the consensus process.
- Steve and Adam agreed that it was good and timely to review the Charter policies and make sure they will continue supporting the Partnership and its collaborative processes.
- Caylin noted that the meeting attendance requirements for participating in consensus decisions would change under the updated Charter, and Suzanne confirmed that the decision to revise the Charter would be made under the current Charter's provisions.
- The Coordinating Committee asked the Charter signatories for a consensus decision on the proposed Charter updates, and consensus to adopt the updated Charter was achieved.
- Alan reminded participants that the Charter is intended to be a living document, so signatories do not need to sign again. Suzanne made signature pages available for anyone who had not previously signed the Charter.

Final consensus decision: Approve the proposed revisions to the Partnership Charter.

Draft Early Implementation Work Plan

- Suzanne gave an overview of the development of the draft Early Implementation Work Plan and the different ways that it will help support implementation of the Partnership's Water Action Plan, including a flowchart that shows how actions could be supported depending on whether they currently have projects identified.
 - When helping spark development of new projects for actions with no projects identified, the Partnership will focus on actions in Priority Group A due to resource limitations; however, the Partnership will not restrict support of actions in lower Priority Groups if members seek support for their projects.
 - Suzanne provided examples of ways that the Partnership could support projects brought forth by Partnership members, such as letters of support, connecting with potential partner organizations, and ideas for funding sources.
 - The Prioritization Work Group identified 10 themed bundles of actions where projects may overlap or complement each other. Bundle action plans are under development.
 - The implementation gaps table help show where no projects have been identified and help from the Partnership is needed to advance the actions.

- The group discussed the draft Early Implementation Work Plan and the project support process.
 - The group discussed the need to develop criteria and a process for the Partnership to provide support to members' projects.
 - The Partnership can support what is currently being done while also advocating for the gaps in implementation.
 - Alan noted that the Water Action Plan and the prioritization process have already had extensive stakeholder input, so projects that fall under the Plan have essentially already been vetted and shouldn't need much additional review in order to be supported.
 - Tyler suggested having groups of experts (e.g., restoration professionals, water providers, etc.) help review projects instead of just a general committee to give more specific feedback and support. The group expressed interest in connecting the bundle work groups to the process.
 - Adam observed that there are benefits to having regional support from the Partnership and targeted support from individual entities.
 - Caylin suggested having a simple process with a form to identify the bundle and action supported and then send the project information to the support committee.
 - Billie Jo pointed out that even a Google form may be complicated for some project leads, and there could be a support letter template that could be modified as needed for different projects.
 - Leah suggested adding information about the process and contact information to the website to make it easy to find once the process is determined.
- The Smartsheet database will be used to track projects and accomplishments and includes a dashboard with metrics.
 - Partnership members who wish to view or edit the project tracking Smartsheet system can contact Suzanne for access.
- ARPA funding for developing the work plan ends in December, so comments are needed by October 30 so the Early Implementation Work Group can wrap up and finalize the draft.

Partnership action item: Please send comments on the draft Early Implementation Work Plan to Suzanne by October 30.

Enabling One Water Security for Climate-Ready Communities

- Billie Jo provided an introduction to the Lincoln County Water Systems Alliance
 - The goal is a 50-year countywide water supply and distribution plan that also protects watersheds, rivers, and streams.
 - Small water systems face challenges in securing the funding, data, and resources they need to invest in infrastructure and plan for the future.
 - Climate change projections show increasing regional challenges around water.
 - The Alliance is seeking the participation of many groups (e.g., cities, districts, County) to develop the 50-year plan to address water supply needs, climate change, infrastructure, and earthquake resilience.
 - The Alliance is working with Oregon State University (OSU) on a four-phase project to develop the 50-year plan and support climate-resilient water systems.
 - Phase 1 involves gathering information on existing studies and plans, and creating a conceptual design for a digital decision support system to look at the feasibility of different options.

- Phase 2 will evaluate the viable options and associated costs, gather additional data if needed, and determine the best options to put into the 50-year plan to support communities and the environment.
 - Phases 3 and 4 focus on implementation and funding.
- Meghna presented information about OSU's involvement in creating the open decision support platform to create the 50-year plan for water security in Lincoln County.
 - Communities will be able to access and use the platform for planning and decision making. This will improve small communities' access to data and tools needed for water availability, infrastructure, and consumption planning.
 - The scope for the first year of the project is to create a conceptual design for the open decision support platform and technology adoption plan for Lincoln County communities to support creation of the 50-year plan, improve disaster resilience, and sustainably protect streams and watersheds.
 - The tool will help support decisions on investments, technologies, infrastructure, outreach, funding, and reuse. It will provide transparency for decision making, inclusive input from stakeholders, allow for data exchange among models, and allow communities to generate scenarios and make water supply decisions.
 - Examples of uses for the tool include evaluating alternative or new sources of water, reducing inefficiencies and inequities in water supply, understanding the impacts of water use scenarios on the environment, and determining how to improve access to clean and safe drinking water.
 - OSU will be conducting focus groups in 2-3 communities to understand their planning needs and the features and capabilities they would like to see in the platform. The next step will be to seek funding to build, test, and deploy the platform.
- Meghna and Billie Jo answered questions from the group
 - As part of Phase 1, the team will ask communities what asset management tools they are using and how they are working.
 - Natural infrastructure will be included in the assessment alongside traditional "gray" infrastructure. ODFW will be involved to provide information about instream needs.
 - The models will be able to look at multiple objectives and help understand impacts and tradeoffs.

Place-based Planning Rulemaking

- Lili described the current rulemaking for the Place-based Integrated Water Resources Planning
 - Statutory authority for the place-based planning (PBP) program sunset in 2023, and the legislature passed a new statute in June 2023 to make the program permanent.
 - New rules for the program and its funding will be included in Division 602 of the Oregon Administrative Rules. The rules will describe the program purpose, eligible grant types and how they will be evaluated, state recognition for PBP plans, match requirements, and grant administrative procedures.
 - Eligible grant types include planning readiness evaluation and preparation, plan development, post-plan coordination, and plan updates. Note: post-plan grants are for ongoing coordination, not funding projects identified in the plans.
 - Maintaining state recognition requires reports every two years, progress toward implementation, and continued commitment to collaboration.

- A Rules Advisory Committee (RAC) has been providing feedback and perspectives on the draft rules and potential fiscal impacts. The RAC includes 23 individuals with experience with PBP or who could be affected by the new rules.
- The new rules will take into account RAC feedback, the evaluation of the pilot PBP program, the recommendations of the state-supported Regional Water Planning and Management Workgroup, Oregon Water Resources Department staff expertise, and interagency consultation.
- The last meeting to discuss the draft rules is planned for November 15, and then there will be a public comment period. Information is available at <https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/programs/policylawandrules/OARS/Pages/Place-Based-Water-Planning.aspx> including the latest draft of the rules and a link to register to attend the RAC meeting as an observer. The public comment period is expected to be in December and January.
- The Water Resources Commission is expected to make a decision on the proposed rule at their March 2025 meeting. Grant solicitations will follow.
- Lili answered questions about the PBP rulemaking.
 - No more than 50% match will be required, and it will be flexible to adapt to needs. In-kind support will be eligible as match.
 - The timing of grant solicitations has not been determined yet. They are still deciding whether to offer all grant types simultaneously or staggered.
 - A broad range of entities will be eligible to be the fiscal agent for the grant. They must be affiliated with a state-recognized plan.
 - Currently, \$2,000,000 is left in the PBP fund and is eligible to be rolled over to the next fiscal year.

Project Sharing by Partnership Members

- Suzanne shared that the Mid-Coast Water Conservation Consortium (Mid-Coast Water) has developed a variety of outreach materials to encourage water conservation in the region.
- Christine shared that ODFW's Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program has a new water conservation station for field trips, developed in partnership with Mid-Coast Water.
- Tyler shared that Lincoln SWCD has received funding for noxious weed abatement of four new weeds (in addition to six already funded) focusing on riparian areas and agricultural areas of significance. Having assessed and prioritized properties in the Siletz River watershed that are eligible for Natural Resources Conservation Service funding, they are requesting funding for 2026 to align with the Oregon Department of Agriculture's Strategic Implementation Area to support voluntary conservation actions.

Committee Reports

- Suzanne shared that the Project Support Committee is in the process of forming and determining its scope and processes. Potential members are currently involved in developing bundle work plans.
- Steve gave an update on the Funding Committee, which is developing a plan to support future collaboration of the Partnership when the ARPA funding ends.
 - Long-term funding is needed for a Partnership Coordinator, potentially from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) or Bureau of Reclamation grants, or from the PBP fund once grants become available.

- In the short term, foundation grants may be available to fill the gap and continue meeting in 2025. Anyone with ideas about suitable grants should contact Steve. (Steve.PARRETT@deq.oregon.gov)
- Seal Rock Water District (SRWD) has been the fiscal agent for the ARPA grant but will not continue in this role after 2024. A new fiscal agent for the Partnership needs to be identified to apply for grants. Some organizations have expressed interest but have capacity issues.
- Adam noted that while SRWD is stepping away from the fiscal agent role, the new fiscal agent would not be starting from scratch. There are tracking and organizational tools to support new organizers.
- The group suggested possible funding sources, such as Oregon Community Foundation and OWEB Focused Investment Partnerships (FIP) or Technical Assistance (TA) grants. The Deschutes Water Collaborative is a similar group and secured OWEB TA funding. TA funding is a good option but is becoming more competitive. The FIP application process is intensive and requires a theory of change.
- Bundle work groups gave updates on their activities. Some bundle work groups are developing work plans based on their capacity. The goal is to present plans to the Early Implementation Work Group in November.
 - Tyler gave an update on Bundle 2 (water quality outreach). The group is seeking feedback on the sequencing of actions and upcoming events where outreach could be conducted over the next 2-5 years. The group has a list of events provided by Lincoln SWCD and MidCoast Watersheds Council so far.
 - Laura gave an update on Bundle 3 (source water protection). The group is developing a plan for actions to promote green infrastructure and low impact development in floodplains and riparian areas in communities in source water areas. They found that there are few urbanized areas in source watersheds other than the City of Siletz. The group is also coming up with a framework for assessing which actions should have the highest priority for source water protection projects.

Thinking Ahead about the Partnership

- ARPA funding ends December 31, 2024, and the Partnership will seek capacity funding for ongoing collaboration
 - A new fiscal agent will be needed for future funding
 - Funding will also be needed for implementation
- There is an opening for one or more co-conveners
- The group discussed their ideas for the future of the Partnership, including their vision of its role, partners roles, and their own roles, depending on whether funding is secured for 2025-2026 or if there is a gap
 - Alan noted that the Partnership had weathered gaps in funding in the past, but some funding is needed for basic communication and coordination. Continuing with a new fiscal agent and having a Coordinator are high priorities. Future funders should recognize the in-kind contributions of member participation, and this should be tracked. Suzanne can provide a list of members who attended meetings or requested reimbursement.
 - Tyler observed that funding is important not just for the Coordinator position but also for participation. Some organizations are grant-funded and need support to attend meetings, which could jeopardize coordination if they can't participate.

- Billie Jo emphasized the importance of keeping the website functional to enable connection and communication. Christine also supported the need to connect the Partnership project support process through the website.
- Steve noted there is power in collective interest. Having the Partnership advocate for policy and legislative issues or funding is powerful because it shows broad support from diverse stakeholders. Funders in Oregon are moving toward supporting collaborative efforts. Adam agreed that the testimony of the pilot PBP groups has been valuable in supporting the continuation and expansion of the program through legislative action.
- Caylin observed that budgets are expected to be tight in the next legislative session, but if groups have strong relationships with elected officials, they may be able to encourage targeted requests for coordination funding support.
- Adam noted that it can be difficult to get the legislature to think about water unless there is a crisis. There is a lot of focus on housing now, but all the new housing will require water and other infrastructure.
- The group discussed the need for sustained funding, such as the PBP fund or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding.
- Billie Jo suggested looking at the Puget Sound Partnership as an example of a well-structured partnership with strong state support and funding.
- Laura supported the idea of a grant coordinator to help the Partnership apply for grants. This could include sustaining coordination and also obtaining funding that member organizations could use as match.
- Alyssa noted that OWRD's role has changed over time but agencies should continue to provide technical assistance and support. So much time has been invested that it's important not to lose momentum and to continue meeting in 2025. The Partnership should think about how to maintain state recognition and find ways to continue collaborating.

Final remarks

- There is a workshop on November 12 about the state Integrated Water Resources Strategy. There will be opportunities for public comment on agency priorities and funding. More information can be found here: <https://www.oregon.gov/owrd/programs/Planning/IWRS/Pages/default.aspx>
- Suzanne provided a recap of the Partnership's accomplishments under the ARPA grant. The Partnership successfully prioritized the 59 actions in the Water Action Plan and reached consensus decisions on the prioritization and the Charter update. The Partnership developed an Early Implementation Work Plan (in draft form, to be finalized by the end of the year), created a project tracking and management Smartsheet tool, and developed bundle action plans. During the ARPA grant, there were four full Partnership meetings and field tours, 19 Work Group meetings, and 24 Coordinating Committee meetings.

<p>Questions/Comments to Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<p>Decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership approves the Partnership Charter revisions
<p>GSI Action Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out meeting follow-up materials • Give people who request it access to the Smartsheet 	<p>Partnership Action Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at meeting follow-up materials and request access to Smartsheet if interested in viewing it or inputting project information • Send GSI reimbursement form if needed to support your participation • Zoom participants: Email GSI the meeting feedback form if desired