



Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership

Date: June 14, 2023, 12:00 – 3:00 pm

Location: Shilo Inn, Newport, Oregon

Conveners: Adam Denlinger, General Manager, Seal Rock Water District

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

Meeting Participants

| Name | Organization (if applicable) |
|--------------------|--|
| Adam Denlinger | Seal Rock Water District |
| Adam Sussman | GSI Water Solutions, Inc. |
| Alan Fujishin | Gibson Farms |
| Alyssa Mucken | Oregon Water Resources Department |
| Annie Martin | Natural Resources Conservation Service |
| Bill Montgomery | No affiliation |
| Billie Jo Smith | Lincoln County Water Systems Alliance |
| Boone Marker | Devils Lake Water Improvement District |
| Bradley Wynn | Seal Rock Water District |
| Brendi Hoch | Seal Rock Water District |
| Caylin Barter | Wild Salmon Center |
| Christine Clapp | Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife |
| Clare Paul | City of Newport |
| David Rupp | Oregon State University |
| Evan Hayduk | MidCoast Watersheds Council |
| Fran Recht | Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission |
| Gary Lahman | Lincoln County Public Health |
| Hui Rodomsky | Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development |
| Kim Bush | Toledo City Council |
| Laura Johnson | Oregon Department of Environmental Quality |
| Leah Cogan | GSI Water Solutions, Inc. |
| Margaret Treadwell | McKenzie River Trust |
| Matt Thomas | Oregon Department of Forestry |
| Mike Broili | MidCoast Watersheds Council |
| Molly Monroe | GSI Water Solutions, Inc. |
| Nikki Hendricks | Oregon Water Resources Department |
| Steve Parrett | Oregon Department of Environmental Quality |
| Suzanne de Szoeki | GSI Water Solutions, Inc. |
| Trish Karlsen | Seal Rock Water District |
| Tyler Clouse | Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District |

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| <p><u>Questions/Comments To Address</u></p> <p>Q: Can GSI run through the prioritization process for one action to help Partners understand the scoring process better?</p> <p>A: GSI will run through the prioritization process for one action at the next Prioritization Work Group meeting.</p> <p>Questions and comments about the prioritization process collected during the meeting are listed below and will be available for consideration by the Prioritization Work Group.</p> | <p><u>Decisions</u></p> <p>- None</p> |
| <p><u>GSI Action Items</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A list of ARPA-eligible project types will be posted on the Partnership website. - Partnership meeting presentations will be posted on the Partnership website. - Send out the prioritization approaches analysis to the Partnership for review - GSI will run through the prioritization process for one action at the next Prioritization Work Group meeting. - Continue collecting project information | <p><u>Partnership Action Items</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Send project information and any input on prioritization approaches to Suzanne by July 10. Contact: sdeszoeke@gsiws.com, 541-257-9006 - Mark your calendar for the next Prioritization Work Group meeting on July 11 at 9 AM. Goal: to select a prioritization approach. |

Welcome

Suzanne de Szoeki (GSI Water Solutions, Inc.) and Adam Denlinger (Seal Rock Water District) welcomed the Partnership to Newport. Suzanne reminded the group of the Partnership’s vision and guiding principles from the Charter and provided an overview of the meeting agenda. Adam described the recent prioritization work of the Partnership in the context of the long-term process and emphasized the importance of collaboration in meeting the Mid-Coast’s shared water challenges.

Water Action Plan Review and Our Next Phase of Work

Suzanne de Szoeki (GSI Water Solutions, Inc.) provided a recap of the Water Action Plan and the funding secured to move forward with implementation.

- The Water Action Plan was approved by the Oregon Water Resources Commission in June 2022.
- The Plan includes 59 actions grouped into 8 imperatives (major categories).

- The Oregon Water Resources Department awarded the Partnership \$250,000 from the ARPA Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to continue place-based planning efforts through December 2024.
- Activities under the grant include prioritizing the Plan's actions, taking initial implementation steps, conducting monthly work group meetings, biannual Partnership meetings, and coordination.
 - Prioritization will include selecting an approach and criteria, applying it to the Plan's actions using available information, and developing a prioritized action list
 - Early implementation steps will be identified for prioritized actions and work plans will be developed to make progress on implementation

Water Action Plan in Action

Three presentations highlighted recent projects that implement specific actions from the Water Action Plan, as described further below.

Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) & My Water Usage Customer Portal

Brendi Hoch and Trish Karlsen (Seal Rock Water District) presented information about Seal Rock Water District's AMI project and customer portal.

- Installation of the AMI system was funded by a \$1.5 million grant from USDA Rural Development.
- Staff attended the 2018 Sensus Reach conference and were inspired to start a customer portal campaign to encourage customers to track and understand their water use.
- Before AMI, meters were read once a month, there was no way to know when high usage occurred, and leak adjustments of up to 5 MG were credited annually.
 - Now meters are read hourly, they are alerted to high usage, and leak adjustments are almost non-existent.
- Customer portal allows for billing cycle usage alerts, daily usage alerts, vacation alerts, and setting a monthly water usage target.
- Customer engagement: logo, website, vehicles, socks, QR code, flyers, happy hour, and plan to do postcards.
- A 10% adoption rate was considered good for customer participation.
 - Using these methods, the District achieved a 10% adoption rate within a few months, 20% within 1 year, and is currently at 32%.
- The District has received positive responses from customers who are able to check their water usage, conserve water, receive timely alerts about potential leaks, and monitor guest usage.
- Infrastructure needed for this type of project includes: radio units that are installed on meters first, then towers or poles that are installed to transmit the radio signal.
- The District replaced all meters at once using grant funding, but other water providers installing AMI often phase it in over 5-10 years.

- There is no cost for customers to sign up for the portal. Operations and maintenance costs are built into water rates, similarly to other infrastructure. The AMI project was funded by a grant from USDA.
- The batteries of AMI units have a 20-year lifespan, although this may be shorter with more frequent readings.

Mid-Coast Water Conservation Consortium (Mid-Coast Water)

Suzanne de Szoeka presented information about the water conservation efforts of the Mid-Coast Water Conservation Consortium, now called Mid-Coast Water.

- Mid-Coast Water was formed in April 2021 by a group of water providers in Lincoln County to promote water conservation and improve regional water supply resilience.
- Water providers pool resources, share knowledge, and build community awareness about water conservation and water supply challenges.
- Initial members include Seal Rock Water District and the cities of Toledo, Lincoln City, Yachats, Newport, and Waldport. The goal is to have all Mid-Coast water providers participating.
- Coordinated messaging about water conservation and drought reduces confusion for customers.
- Water providers are able to pool resources and get bulk discounts on conservation supplies offered to customers, such as showerheads, faucet aerators, and leak detection tablets.
- Ongoing activities include water conservation outreach, a Water Provider Resources Guide, distribution of water-efficient fixtures, and an elementary school water conservation lesson plan.
- Suzanne shared examples of outreach materials such as a newsletter article, billing insert, Consumer Confidence Report content, and website content.
- Planned activities include event outreach, vacation rental outreach materials, a rebate program for larger fixtures (e.g., water-efficient toilets, washing machines, etc.), and student outreach.
- Interested water providers can contact Mid-Coast Water at any time to become a member. Contributions are voluntary, and the scope and budget change annually depending on planned activities.

Assessing Climate-Related Risk and Adaptation Options for Water Suppliers along the Oregon Coast

David Rupp (Oregon State University) presented information about a study to assess changes in water supply and demand in the Mid-Coast due to climate change.

- This study falls under Actions 27 and 43 of the Water Action Plan: “Using the Water Management Economic Assessment Model, develop a suite of adaptation measures (e.g., storage investments, conservation rebate programs, and new pricing models) to address existing and predicted water shortages in the region.”

- These actions were proposed pre-pandemic, and there have been some adjustments to the scope and expectations of the project since then.
- The objective is still to support the analysis of water supply and demand in the Mid-Coast long into the future.
- Desired outcomes include estimating climate change impacts on long-term water supply and demand, evaluating the future reliability of water supply systems and instream protection, and exploring alternatives to meet future water needs.
- Steps for assessing effects on water demand: 1) estimate sensitivity of municipal water demand to weather using available data; 2) obtain future climate scenarios; 3) estimate future changes in water demand due to projected change in climate variables.
- Changes in temperature were found to cause the greatest change in demand.
 - Monthly water demand in Newport increased the most during hot days in the Willamette Valley (likely due to the presence of visitors).
- Increases in demand due to climate change alone are low and gradual, about 1% per decade.
- Two climate change scenarios were used, representing moderate and high greenhouse gas emissions.
- They would like to expand the analysis to other water providers if the data are available. It's important to analyze data at a meaningful local scale rather than generalizing to large scales like "Western Oregon."
- Steps for assessing effects on water supply: 1) obtain projections of future streamflow under different climate scenarios; 2) calculate how often streamflow falls below thresholds of interest in the future.
 - Currently, sufficient data for the analysis is only available for the Siletz River.
- The model shows that by the end of the century, there would be about one additional week per year when the July-August streamflow on the Siletz River is below the instream water rights.
 - Similarly, there would be about one additional week per year when streamflow would be insufficient to meet all surface water rights.
- Steps for assessing effects on water system reliability: 1) develop a simple model of a municipal water system; 2) simulate future daily demand and supply; 3) model ability to meet future demand under different management alternatives. Three alternatives were analyzed:
 - Alternative 1: Maximize water rights to keep Big Creek reservoirs full. There is plentiful storage all year, and the full Siletz River water right would be used all summer.
 - Alternative 2: No withdrawals from the Siletz River when flow is below the instream water right (long periods in summer). Storage will be insufficient to meet demand in some years.
 - Alternative 3: No withdrawals from the Siletz River when flow is below the instream water right, with exceptions (use half of the Siletz River water right

when reservoir storage drops below 50%). Storage gets uncomfortably low during many years.

- Note that Newport's water right on the Siletz River is a small fraction of total water rights. Reducing their withdrawals alone will make a small impact and should be part of a basin-wide plan to improve streamflow.
- Next steps: document water demand analysis for other water providers, get input from the Partnership on how to use remaining time, and determine how OSU can continue supporting the Water Action Plan beyond the end of this project.
 - Project end date is August 30, 2023.

Prioritization Process for Actions in the Water Action Plan

Leah Cogan (GSI Water Solutions, Inc.) presented information about the prioritization process that the Prioritization Work Group has been undertaking over the past few months.

- Reasons to prioritize include implementing the approved Water Action Plan (which states that prioritization should occur), focusing energy and resources strategically, developing Work Plans to make progress on each imperative, and determining how funding can support early implementation steps.
- Each action-oriented imperative will have a Work Plan that will include relevant actions from the cross-cutting imperatives.
- This process is to prioritize actions listed in the Water Action Plan. A separate project support process is being developed.
 - Actions are typically described in general terms, and many projects could fall under the same action.
- Three approaches were initially considered by the Work Group, and one additional hybrid approach was added.
 - Method 1: prioritize based on the benefits of the action
 - Method 2: prioritize based on readiness to implement the action
 - Method 3: a champion will bring each project to the group for support
 - Method 3, the champion approach, will likely be used for the project support process rather than for prioritizing actions.
 - Method 1a: hybrid of methods 1 and 2, using an overall score that includes criteria for benefits and readiness.
- The decision support system (scoring criteria for Method 1, 1a, or 2) would be used to sort actions within each imperative into 3 priority groups.
 - Work Plans would be created for Group A first, then Groups B and C as time and funding allow.
- Method 1 action benefit criteria include improvements to water quantity, improvements to water quality, providing both instream and out-of-stream benefits, providing a regionwide benefit, helping implement a state or regional plan (see Appendix D of the Water Action Plan), and improving stakeholder understanding.

- Method 2 readiness and urgency criteria include eligibility for ARPA funding, addressing a natural hazard or emergency preparedness, readiness to implement, and level of specificity of the concept in the action.
- Method 1a uses all of the above criteria to provide an overall score.
- Scoring thresholds were used to sort the actions into priority groups.
- Leah described a test run of the three methods prioritizing six actions related to Imperative 8, Ecosystem Protection and Enhancement.
 - Some actions ended up in the same priority group using all three methods, and some ended up in different priority groups for every method.
 - Using the overall score in Method 1a led to many actions receiving mid-range scores and ending up in Group B.
- Leah shared general themes from test runs conducted on other action-oriented imperatives.
 - Many actions under Imperative 4 ended up in Group A, highlighting the importance of water conservation.
 - Test runs for Imperatives 5 (resilient water infrastructure) and 6 (source water protection) were similar to the test run described for Imperative 8.
 - Imperative 7 (water supply planning) only includes 2 actions, which can be prioritized alongside actions from related imperatives.
- Method 1 is likely to prioritize actions that will have great benefits for the region, but may miss out on funding shovel-ready projects that would be eligible for ARPA funding but have lower scores.
- Method 2 would prioritize actions that are ready to go and fundable, but may be more opportunistic than strategic.
- Method 1a balances benefits and readiness, but may lead to uneven priority groupings with many actions in Group B.

Prioritization Breakout Session

The attendees gathered in 4 groups to discuss the prioritization approaches and share their ideas for how to move forward. Ideas shared include the following:

- Readiness and capacity (staffing) to implement actions is very important.
- We should use the funding while it is available. We don't know what the funding landscape will look like in 5-10 years.
- The number of criteria proposed is manageable and will provide a transparent process for prioritization.
- We could consider if there are any legislative deadlines as part of the urgency criteria.
- Having a "bell curve" using Method 1a with many actions falling into Group B is not necessarily negative. It may be beneficial to start with a few high priority Group A actions, and by the time those are being implemented, some of the Group B actions may rise to the top naturally and be ready to implement.

- Work plans should take a regional approach and will be helpful for sustaining investment in the Partnership's collaborative efforts.
- We could consider the timing of benefits (immediate versus long-term). We need a way to capture actions that are short- versus long-term to achieve the desired benefits.
- We could consider whether seed funding through the ARPA grant would open doors to additional implementation of actions.
- Methods 1a and 2 are responsive to opportunities. For example, if there is funding and a willing landowner, progress can be made.
- It would be helpful to walk the group through the process of scoring one action or one imperative.
- The prioritization criteria can be used to make projects that would happen anyway (champion projects) more impactful. For example, the project scope could be modified to better match agreed-upon goals of the Partnership.
- It has taken a long time to get to this point in the process, but there are still too many actions to address at once, so how can we move forward? The prioritization criteria will be helpful.
- There is a lot of merit to Method 1a because it combines strategic ranking of actions based on cumulative benefit and also sifts the priority list further based on project readiness and urgency factors.
- The con of Method 1a is having a lot of actions in Group B, which can be disheartening to those already exhausted with the planning process.
- There is an outstanding question for the timeline, knowing that federal funding has a limited duration of 4-5 years.

Project Information Collection

Attendees had an opportunity to provide information about current and future projects at four breakout stations around the room. Each station had a project collection information sheet and a map on which participants could place sticky notes.

Information on current projects can be used to track progress in implementing the Water Action Plan, and information on future projects can be used for the "action readiness" scoring criterion in the prioritization process.

Information collected can also be used in the Work Plans to show geographic priority areas, identify gaps, and identify synergies and partnership opportunities for entities working in the same area or watershed.