

Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership Prioritization Work Group Meeting

Date: Tuesday, April 11, 2023, 9:00am – 11:00 am

Location: Hybrid (Seal Rock Water District Office and Virtual)

Convenors: Adam Denlinger (Seal Rock Water District)

Facilitator: Suzanne de Szoeki (GSI Water Solutions, Inc.)

In-person participants:

Alan Fujishin - Gibson Farms

Fran Recht – Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, MidCoast Watersheds Council Board Member

Mike Broili– MidCoast Watersheds Council Board Chair, Newport Water Supply Management and Conservation Work Group

Aaron Collett – City of Newport, City Engineer

Adam Denlinger -- Seal Rock Water District

Brad Wynn -- Seal Rock Water District

Bill Montgomery – MidCoast Watersheds Council Board Member and certified water treatment plant operator

Online participants:

Stephanie Reid – City of Lincoln City

Adam Sussman -- GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

Mikaela Clarke -- GSI Water Solutions, Inc.

Margaret Treadwell – McKenzie River Trust, Central Coast Conservation Program Manager

Janna Stevens - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Water Planning Coordinator

Alyssa Mucken - Oregon Water Resources Department

Olivia Jasper – Regional Water Quality Specialist with ODA (south Willamette and Mid-Coast regions)

Paul Engelmeyer – land manager for Audubon and Wetlands Conservancy; Mid-Coast Watershed Council Board Member

Suzy Driver – Attorney for Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

Caylin Barter – Wild Salmon Center

Tyler Clouse – Lincoln Soil and Water Conservation District, Watersheds Program Specialist

William Smith – Architect based in Portland, teaches at UO

Billie Jo Smith – Lincoln County Water Systems Alliance

Sam Hillman – McKenzie River Trust

Sherry Dickinson –

Clare Paul – City of Newport

Steve Parrett -- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Questions to Follow-up</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Decisions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GSI will test out the three-level prioritization approach before the next meeting - GSI will develop a description of the approach focused initially on assisting ready projects before next meeting
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>GSI Action Items</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put information on websites (meeting notes, document links) - Share Travel reimbursement form - Share feedback on prioritization approach and criteria input document - Share drafted prioritization approach - Provide form to fill in project info - Share Charter and proposed charter updates for feedback - Outline project readiness approach so the partners can look at it as an option 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Partners Action Items</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide input on documents GSI will send

Meeting agenda:

- Introductions and protocols
- March meeting recap and notes review
- Partnership participation topics
- Summary of input on prioritization approaches and criteria
- Prioritization approach ideas
- Next steps

Summary:

Suzanne recapped the Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership (Partnership) approved Water Action Plan and that OWRD awarded the Partnership \$250,000 from the ARPA Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Fund to support its place-based planning efforts, specifically the prioritization of Water Action Plan implementation actions and initial steps to implement prioritized actions.

Suzanne discussed the March meeting notes, explained that more lengthy notes will be developed in the future, all attendees will be listed together instead of separate sections, and the notes will clearly list the following: questions, decisions, GSI action items, and Partner action items.

Suzanne addressed questions from the March Prioritization Work Group meeting. In response to the question about whether stipends will be available to assist Partnership participation, Suzanne said that participants can apply for travel reimbursement through submitting a reimbursement form that GSI will share. The form is one that has been used by Seal Rock Water District. In addition, Suzanne said that meeting participation by organizations can be supported in special cases and GSI is accepting letters from organizations that describe financial need to participate in monthly meetings and the Partnership meetings. These letters will be reviewed by the Coordinating Committee and additional review will be sought if needed.

Aaron Collett, City of Newport City Engineer, discussed the City of Newport Big Creek Dam project to answer questions raised during the March meeting:

- The lower and upper earthen dams built in the 50s and 60s-70s were built on unstable soils. State investigations determined that the dams were “potentially unsafe” and “unsafe” as of 2020. The City has spent nearly \$6M to remedy this, and they now have a larger grant through OWRD, and they got the first installment of \$4M in October. After geotechnical investigations, they plan to build a 500 ft concrete dam downstream that would provide more capacity than the other two dams and would last longer. The next grant installment of \$10M will go into design of the dam (3 years), and then building the dam (3 years). The old dams are not in good condition, and there have been multiple rounds of mitigation to address issues. The soil underneath the older dams is too soft and will not hold up if there is a moderately sized earthquake, but a concrete dam will not fail in the event of an earthquake as big as the Cascadia.

Discussion about the dam project:

- There was a request for the plan for the project. Aaron said the plan is not publicly available for review yet as it is in its preliminary stages
- Concerns brought up:

- Fran: concerned about the Siletz as it is already dry June through October, and she asked if the City would give up their Siletz water rights as a concession to environmental considerations as part of the large infrastructure project.
 - Aaron answered that the City can reduce their impact on the Siletz by having a bigger reservoir, because they can take water in the winter and store it until the summer.
 - Suzanne reminded the group that the Water Action Plan discusses possible ways to reduce pressure on the Siletz.
- Fran: Concerned about water pricing and conservation, particularly with the City's larger water users, and concerned about federal money going into the dam and not into fisheries.
 - Aaron and Clare acknowledged the importance of conservation in parallel with the need for the dam. There have been communications with the City's large industrial partners about the dam, although they do not have an action plan yet. The City will be funding both conservation and the dam project. Suzanne informed the group that Newport is part of the MidCoast Water Conservation Consortium which is focused on water conservation outreach and its new website will be launched soon. Mike added that a Water Supply Management and Conservation Work Group was just started to address these issues and reduce demand on the Siletz.
- Paul added to the conservation concerns and brought up source water protection as the other side of the equation to both protect fish and get conservation benefits.
 - He mentioned a recent study that emphasizes this, which he will share with the group and GSI will make available on the Partnership website
- Alan and Bill discussed altering the timing of when users need water from the Siletz, rather than giving up water rights
- Alan posed the question of how to price these resources, and that it is beyond most cities' budgets to really change the system, so outside entities are important.

Suzanne stated that GSI has reviewed the charter and will share ideas for minor updates that convey how the Partnership will support implementation of the Water Action Plan. This is intended to address questions about the role of the Partnership in this new phase of its efforts. Caylin noted that there is currently only one co-convener and suggested that OWRD be a co-convener.

Suzanne stated that a list of contact names and their affiliations is available upon request, in response to a question about the list at the March meeting. Contact Suzanne.

Suzanne went over the groups' input on prioritization approaches and criteria from a document distributed since the last meeting

- The document asked presented different prioritization approach options for different imperatives and asked individuals to identify which prioritization approaches could be a good fit for the different imperatives, asked for feedback on different prioritization criteria, and requested project information. A summary of feedback showed that the group thinks the Decision Support System worked best for the various imperatives, and some thought that approach in combination with the deliberation process would be good. Individuals liked most of

the criteria, though were unsure how some could be applied. Suzanne said that she would share summary results.

Feedback on the prioritization approaches and criteria input document:

- Comments on the approaches included that time horizons (short to long) could be considered, the approaches were not clear because of a lack of information, infrastructure prioritization should be linked to economic analysis, and a deeper discussion of approaches would be helpful
- Alan discussed how budget ties into approaches and how this varies for each partner, so partners may use their capacity to implement actions regardless of prioritization. He also brought up how each imperative will be important to a partner in some capacity.
 - o Suzanne clarified that the goal of prioritization is not to eliminate any actions, but is to organize our approach.
 - o Caylin agreed that money is important in long term plans

Suzanne went over a proposed Decision Support System prioritization approach

- She discussed benefits of the Decision Support System approach: it's scalable, allows a wide variety of criteria, enables criteria to be weighed
- The approach includes three levels:
 - o 1. Overarching criteria (starting point for discussion): criteria of high importance that are applicable to all imperatives
 - o 2. Imperative specific criteria
 - o 3. Urgency and readiness criteria

Feedback on Decision Support System approach:

- Several participants thought the urgency and readiness criteria should be prioritized before other considerations.
- Adam had concerns about new projects clearly stating the benefits to instream and out of stream uses. For example, the partnership needs to address the low hanging fruit which is conservation (e.g. California uses less water per capita). We can all agree that we don't all value water the way we should and we need to keep questioning how our actions show how we value water.
- Paul liked the idea of an education project for conservation. He stated that we are headed towards resiliency and ways to produce more water, but we need more economic and other types of analyses, such as a recent FEMA ecosystem processes analysis (will be shared on the Partnership website)
- Alan's idea was to go 1. Goals 2. Objectives 3. Strategies and to put more transitory items at the end.
- Janna suggested considering timelines in the approach process
- Caylin suggested making a document where you can see all levels of criteria in one place (rather than slides) and suggested testing the approach
- Suzanne agreed that testing out the approach is important. The group decided to test the Decision Support System approach doing level 1 through 3 as presented, and swapped, before the next meeting.
- Billie Jo was concerned about the prioritization process being bureaucratic and wants to start taking action on projects that partners have ready to go. She thinks level 3 makes sense and that levels 1 and 2 have already been done. She supports a Champion approach.

- Caylin provided this comment: I'm hearing "yes and" -- YES there's value in a decision support tool to see how possible projects stack up in terms of delivering on imperatives in the action plan, AND we should be coordinating around projects partners are doing/are trying to do
- Suzanne posed questions about the timing of the 3 levels: does doing level 3 third really push the timeline way out? Is there much of a difference in how we approach the process? Can we still meet the urgency and go through the process
- Adam brought up that the project's readiness needs to meet the Partnerships criteria still with instream/out-of-stream needs. Funding is limited so we want to remain focused on our objectives.
- Caylin: doing of these things in parallel would be valuable. That's been a reason for place-based planning to occur, is all these individual entities to do the best they can in what often functions as a vacuum. We want co-benefits and to deliver on a series of different imperatives.
- Billie Jo: What can an organization that brings a project to the Partnership expect? An organization can show how the project fits the Water Action Plan. Partnership can point groups to funding and provide helpful input or support, like a letter.
- Adam: it's going to take a partner with a high level of capacity, staff, etc to manage some of the projects that are listed in the imperatives.