

CJP Community Forum: Water Goal | Meeting Notes

Thursday, October 23, 2025

Attendees - In Person

John Wasiutynski - Project staff, Mult Co Sustainability
Tim Lynch - Project staff, Mult Co Sustainability
Willy Levinson - Human Access Project
Lynn Brown - Oregon Water Futures
Noriko Yamaguchi - OHSU/PSU School of Public Health
April Ann Fong - PCC Sylvania Biology & Environmental Science
Diane Messendetta - Extinction Rebellion
Agazi Negatu - Ethiopian & Eritrean CULTural & Resource Center
Barbara Ford - Citizen Climate Justice
Bob Sweet - 350 PDX
Theodore Tsongas - OPSR Member
Daniel Jerres - Columbia River Keeper

Attendees - Online

Jairaj Singh - Project staff, Mult Co Environmental Health
Jeremy O'leary - Emergency preparedness focus
Kathy Sheeran - EMSWCD - Urban lands team
Mira Mohsini - CCC Senior Researcher
Polet Campos - CCC Research Associate - Food sovereignty
Rose Poton - Verde - Water Futures Collaborative
Santi Sanchez - CCC - Climate and Health Coordinator
Taren Evans - CCC - EJ Director - SC member for CJP
Dr. Theodora Tsongas - Epidemiologist
Maleek McKenzie - Sierra Club - Energy Justice Org
Denise Lopez - Gresham Climate Analyst
Xitlali Torres - Verde AQ Coord
Randall - Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council

Metric Notes/Comments

- Metrics are tied to the universal goals, not to the strategies specifically
- The main goal is inclusive, but the metrics are geared towards people exclusively, nothing for the natural environment. Feels like something missing
- Amend metric 1 to include safety and well being of all living things, not just humans
- Clean water act focus on fish health and swimmable/access
- Clean drinking water act - access to clean water; Endangered species act
- Jeremy: not specifically called out manage grey/black water post disaster, recognizing that this is huge topic, trying to find the right level, but these are missing from discussion
- John: 99% of the time it is safe to swim in the river, but there is a perspective that it may not be
- Mentioning habit is important, fishable is still a very human centric view

- There can be competing interests, for example, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife may want to encourage fishing, but health advisory may recommend against eating those same fish.
- Need something about: Human health, Getting in the water, Critter health; Physical barriers/conditions to aquatic health
- Metric could include aspects of first foods, salmon specifically/mention biodiversity specific
- Alternatives, could look at a more micro scale - macroinvertebrates as an indicator
- Roy: challenge is that some monitoring is geared towards specific habitats
 - Example of Sandy river where the water quality (temp for example) may not be high but has some of the highest salmonids populations
- Different metrics between urban vs. rural areas of the County? Roy implied that looking at river/tributary types may be more specific.
- Drinking water is a different issue based on water source, for example some households, especially in rural areas, may be on an individual well, or urban in urban areas served by a municipal water supply, (e.g. bull run/columbia well field)
- Good opportunity to plug in and link to the work of watershed councils
- Is drinking water access, from an affordability perspective, worthwhile as a focus?
- Rose: metrics are good but vague, opportunity for more detail, water temperatures, etc.
 - Metrics are a little human centric. Has a lot of notes that they will share.
- Could improve on the barriers metric, by including broadly the conditions of the waterways, including temperatures.
- Also need to include experience/stories to ground truth
- What data is already collected?
- Seeking alignment - who else is tracking these - governmental and non-governmental?
- How do we arrive at the baseline data?
- Important that there is a recognition of disruptive factors, that we aren't living in a static time
 - Drinking water access post disaster is a major issue for example
- Environmental goals are hard to reach because there are so many factors. For example, HABs are triggered in part by upstream agriculture. One way to narrow would be to look at outputs, e.g. how many people are reached and are aware of fish advisories.
- John: will be looking at output metrics more with the strategies, are we seeing progress on the strategies?
- Kathy: We can make the assumption that MultCo would not be doing all the measuring, but will be taking information from a myriad of entities. Looking back to old report cards from the City of Portland. She was excited about the high level outcomes, but the data itself may be hard to gather. Look for ways to pull together information that is already being tracked.
- The County will be reliant on outside data collection to support the metrics, with the exception of maybe public health goals.
- Maleek: There are ways to filter out the things that are not in Multnomah County control.
- Kathy (via chat): "These have their own flaws and I don't think they have been updated for awhile, but something to consider looking at in regard to getting at baseline measurements: <https://www.portland.gov/bes/protecting-rivers-streams/portlands-watershed-report-cards>"
- Rose (via chat): "I like how they have indicators: hydrology, water quality, habitat, and fish and wildlife."

- Jeremy (via chat): “I would suggest adding a metric for Multnomah County residents to have access to adequate sanitation services.”
- The City report card project for example took a tremendous amount of effort to pull together.
- Is there a way to look at indicator species?
- Willy: What is the use of the report / indicators, how will the general public absorb this information, is it helpful in supporting organizing and advocacy? What are the pathways for dissemination, ways to make it more consumable? Is it possible to make this a tool for hope and education, especially for younger generations who may have lost hope about climate?
- Is it possible to take out “berm breaks” on Ross Island to abate hazardous algal blooms, relatively easy fixes, and big results in short periods of time. Might be helpful to have indicators
- Rosa (via chat): “Just sharing the Water Justice Action Framework that Oregon Water Futures published in Nov 2022 to maybe helps support the climate justice plan:
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609d9e5f77619d2a9f89795d/t/6388e0a800947e6dae8d2da8/1669914801977/OR+Water+Justice+Framework_FINAL+113022.pdf”
- Metrics 1 and 4 are similar, could combine or use clarification
- Metric - access to adequate sanitation (including publicly accessible bathrooms in town)
 - Find what’s out there and build on that first
- Theodora (via chat): “if we want to use water quality metrics over a span of years, because the drinking water sources in different parts of the county may vary in quality depending on season and source of the water, which metrics of water quality would be used and how do we account for the variation in source of water? For example, Portland gets drinking water from both Bull Run and wells next to the Columbia River.”

Strategies Notes/Comments

- Making the link between climate justice and water justice -
 - Lead for example - Explore the connection between lead and climate change
- One way to look at it is cumulative impacts, or funding
- Running aquifers dry may make us turn to sources of water, including those that may be contaminated
- Is it better to narrow down or to be comprehensive, even if we don’t have more direct control of these things?
- Allowing things that effective people most directly
- Important to think about things that we can have an impact on over the next three years
- Asset mapping for emergency water sources is critical, discreet and short term
- Thinking about rain water collection for irrigation, not for flushing toilets
- Prioritizing actions that are budget wise realistic, impact wise realistic, high priority, starting with wins and building from there when resources may be more available.
- Hazardous Algal Blooms have been a clear climate indicator
- The importance of wins to give confidence to the work and that people can feel a sense of hope and that more can be accomplished.
 - Beaver creek is a great example of pulling together to tackle big, difficult things. Metro, EMSWCD
- Jeremy: change water testing kit language to include arsenic and nitrates issues with wells for example. Concern about pumping up from aquifers, especially if they are drawn down, risk of incorporating them into water supplies.

- Cost to the government is included in the worksheet, but cost to residents is not included explicitly. Ensure that low income people are protected. Maybe we need to have a specific action/metric about water burden similar to the energy burden action.
- Denise: Gresham - talked about water affordability side
- Taren: modify the strategy about affordability education that is more of a call to action for advocacy to grow/expand these programs.
- Rose: agreed that part of the issue is that these programs are just not accessible, in Rockwood for example, they don't know who to call, or they don't speak the language, or are afraid to reach out. Water assistance is a bandaid, but we also need to look at how to decrease the cost of water programs. Working with OWFC and PWB to figure out how to lower those costs.
- Incentivizing water management/efficiency - OWFC - statewide, asking who is and should be using the fresh water. Households are being told to conserve water, but the amount used by industry and data centers for example are far higher, what are the rate structures that are being used to determine their costs of water? Focus on reducing water bills themselves.
 - Many in the room supported this comment.
- Is there a way to cross educate around different support programs, across water and energy?
- Willy: Water rates are a regressive cost, water cost relative to impact for something that everyone needs.
- Gas and electric now have a low income rate, is there a space for a water version of this?
- We want/need to make investments in environmental protection/restoration, but those costs are then passed on in a regressive manner for their rates.
- Give-aways from Portland Water Bureau for tools through culturally responsive programming, is a good example of good community based work. Working on resilience in african/afrocarribena communities.
- Bill forgiveness programs are important. Also, people will use resources if they help save on their bills.
- Culturally specific outreach.
- Wildfire threats to Bull Run watershed. Have we consulted with tribes around wildfire stewardship? IT would be great to include local tribe experience around land/wildfire stewardship.
- Xitlali agreed, and wanted to emphasize this for the entire plan.
- Willy: public pools in the summer time are all heated, and would have more of a cooling effect if we didn't. Save the energy/money and reinvest in access. Check that sanitation requirements/chemistry are tied to pool temperature conditions.
- Maleek: Landscaping regulation - running sprinklers, flooding / overwatering,
- EMSCD does some conservation workshops on landscape water conservation. Plan includes incentivizing conservations, but is there room for active discouragement? Landscaping is one of the number one places that people put their water. Need for greater communication.
- Corporate energy/data centers, using more water than for municipalities. Is there a possibility for some kind of PCEF payment for water overuse? Opportunity to work collaboratively also with these entities to understand what opportunities there are.
- Xitali (via chat): "I would agree that almost everything is linked to Climate Justice for so many reasons. Just plain we will need to drink more water for our bodies to cope with extreme heat."
- Denis (via chat): "One other thing to add, an example of a plan that solely focused on direct emission reductions and ignored everything else is Metro's process. So the flipside was a plan

that doesn't contain key community concerns and more of a reason to support plans that are holistic like the County's."

- Jeremy (via chat): "Is it more about adequate water testing? One of the wells I get water from in one location has massive arsenic issues."
- Kathy (via chat): "I feel like even the AI response is from a national perspective and really isn't as relevant here? (Compared to other parts of the Nation)...(in regard to lead)."
- Denise (via chat): "And as an AI hater, a good example of listening to experts and verifying info you see from AI"
- Maleek (via chat): "Strategy should include testing kits for all contaminants not just lead. That was an excellent point that was raised. About the arsenic."
- Jeremy (via chat): "I took some of the fisheries classes at MHCC."
- Denise (via chat): [CGA-Factsheets 012324](#)
- Rose (via chat): "One thing that the PWB/BES will be exploring further is sub-metering."
 - "No Water Shutoffs would be great and removing the penalty fees."
- Polet (via chat): *(In regards to pools in the summer)* "They're heated in the morning for youth and elders!"
- Xitali (via chat): "+ native garden programs, is that in the food goal as well."
- Rose (via chat): "I think we actually have some in Portland."
 - Xitali (via chat): <https://www.datacentermap.com/usa/oregon/portland/> is this accurate?"
 - Rose (via chat): "I think so."
- Taren (via chat): "I've thought about that in terms of the POWER act related to energy last session and if something like that could be done for water."