State of Oregon
DEQ Department of Environmental Quality

Water Reuse Advisory Group Meeting

Water Reuse Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Minutes

Virtual Meeting – August 6, 2026, 2 p.m.

This is the second of a series of bi-monthly Water Reuse Advisory Group meetings focused on identifying reuse barriers, developing policy recommendations, analyzing technical issues, and sharing information across sectors. The goal is to promote transparency and shared understanding across public and private interests.

Attendees (Groups)

- Amazon Web Services (AWS)
- Association of Oregon Counties
- City of Bend Water Services
- Clean Water Services
- Grand Ronde Tribal Nation
- Klamath Tribal Nation
- League of Oregon Cities
- Oregon Association of Nurseries
- Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)
- Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)
- Oregon Environmental Council
- Oregon Health Authority (OHA)
- Oregon State University (OSU)
- Oregon Water Resources Congress
- Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA)
- Special Districts Association of Oregon
- Water Resources Department (WRD)
- WaterWatch of Oregon
- WateReuse Association

Meeting minutes

Welcome and Member Introductions

- Participants introduced themselves in the chat. DEQ staff provided verbal introductions, including program roles related to water reuse.

Meeting Logistics and Agenda Overview

- DEQ reviewed meeting logistics, communications ground rules, the meeting plan, and noted that Meeting #1 minutes will be posted publicly on the DEQ Recycled Water webpage.

Overview of Barrier Summary Document

DEQ presented the updated barrier summary, noting it includes input from emails, Meeting #1 transcripts, and submissions from members. Members noted that additional barriers have been submitted since the document was assembled and DEQ confirmed the list will be updated after each meeting. Initial comments regarding the barrier document included:

- Concern that recycled/reclaimed water is still treated as a “waste product” rather than a recoverable resource, affecting permitting complexity.
- Some states approach reuse differently, including separating certain uses from NPDES permitting; members requested more information on those examples.

Terminology Discussion: Recycled vs. Reclaimed Water

DEQ presented a draft poll to gather group input on terminology alignment across state agencies. Key themes raised:

- Public perception matters; several members noted “recycled water” may be more approachable for the public than “reclaimed water.”
- Members emphasized choosing terminology that is broad, clear, and supports expanded reuse.
- Some noted that using two terms creates confusion across agencies.
- DEQ described statutory constraints and the difference between rule-based terminology changes versus statutory changes.
- Some members emphasized consistency across agencies and minimizing risks and complications associated with statutory changes.

DEQ will distribute the terminology poll following the meeting.

Intersection of Recycled Water on Tribal Nations’ Land

- Members representing Tribal Nations within Oregon noted that water reuse is not commonly discussed in some basins and asked how this work connects to broader hydrology and water management concerns.
- Tribal Nation representatives sought clarification on water quality throughout different stages of recycled water use and how water is characterized within various reuse applications across the state.
- DEQ provided an overview on the potential intersection of water reuse and Tribal Nation Lands related to water rights and water quality, and shared recycled water beneficial purposes and the currently approved beneficial purpose table for program clarification.

Barrier Discussion

The advisory group held an open discussion on barriers to implementing water reuse projects in Oregon. The points below summarize key themes raised during the discussion. This list is not exhaustive and should not be interpreted as representing the views or consensus of all participants.

Regulatory Definitions and Public Perception

- Members reiterated concerns about how wastewater and recycled water are defined and perceived, noting the value of framing reuse as resource recovery.

Water Quality Monitoring

- OSU researchers described challenges in monitoring organic chemicals and emerging contaminants.
- Members discussed limitations in current monitoring capacity and potential approaches to expanded testing, including international models where treatment facilities maintain high-throughput analytical capability.
- DEQ noted CECs will be considered during future rulemaking.

Water Rights, Irrigation Canals, and Agency Coordination

- Members noted challenges regarding water rights, irrigation canals, and consumptive use calculations.

- Members and state agencies emphasized complexity associated with the Maui decision and federal definitions of Waters of the US.
- Irrigation districts described increasing difficulty securing approvals for recycled water augmenting canal flows compared with previous years.
- Members highlighted that water rights protections and exemptions are nuanced, and additional cross-agency work is needed to clarify roles and thresholds.
- Water Resources Department staff provided clarification on limited WRD authority in reuse, triggers for additional evaluation, and statutory reclaimed water registration criteria.

Interagency Coordination

- Several members emphasized the need for better alignment across the different state regulatory agencies.
- Members encouraged agencies to focus on intersections rather than siloed responsibilities.
- DEQ proposed providing a statewide flow chart for recycled/reclaimed water permitting to clarify steps and responsibilities. DEQ confirmed that work is underway through the Interagency Water Reuse Team and will be incorporated into updates to the IMD.
- Members emphasized that predictability in long-term planning is important for water reuse projects.

Examples of Existing Projects and Barriers

- Members shared experiences with delayed project approvals and identified the need for earlier cross-agency engagement.
- DEQ noted plans to introduce pre-application meetings to identify feasibility and agency involvement earlier in the process.

Industrial Reuse

- Members asked about the sequence of domestic vs. industrial reuse rulemaking.
- DEQ clarified that current work follows legislative direction to focus on domestic recycled water first, with industrial reuse regulations planned for subsequent development.

Next Steps

Following this meeting and prior to Meeting #3 DEQ will:

- Update the barrier summary document and propose possible solutions
- Send out the terminology poll
- Circulate Meeting #2 minutes for review
- Post the Meeting #1 minutes on the DEQ recycled water webpage
- Schedule October 2026 meeting

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