

Drinking Water Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2026

In-Person and Virtual Meeting (Teams)

Members and Alternate Members Present

Ashley Davis, Conference of Local Health Officials

Jason Green, Chair, Oregon Association of Water Utilities

Michael Grimm, Special Districts Association of Oregon

Mike Masters, Large Water Systems

Craig Sheahan, American Council of Engineering Companies of Oregon

Virtual Members

Sandra Bishop, League of Women Voters of Oregon

Scott Bradway,

Jessica Dorsey, Pacific NW Section, American Water Works Association

Caroline Gross-Regan, Oregon Environmental Health Association

Cheyenne Holliday, Water Consumers

Adam Jackson, Privately Owned Water Systems

Chris MacQuarrie, Plumbers/Backflow Testers

Beth Myers, Oregon Environmental Lab Association

Kim Ramsay, Oregon Environmental Laboratory Association

Members Absent

Lacey Goeres-Priest, Vice Chair, League of Oregon Cities

Craig Harper, Watershed Councils

Karen Lewotsky, Environmental Advocacy Groups

DWS Staff

Michelle Byrd, Adam DeSemples, Chuck Michael, Samina Panwhar, and Kari Salis.

October meeting minutes and action items review

Craig Sheehan motioned to approve the October minutes and Mike Grimm seconded. A vote was taken and minutes were unanimously approved.

DWS: Samina, Kari, Michelle

- October minutes: no changes. Craig Sheehan moved to approve, Mike Grimm seconded. No discussion. all said Aye, no opposed.
- Agenda check: Legislation during short session impacting drinking water? Samina will cover this topic in her program updates.
- Public input: none.
- Program update, Samina Panwhar
 - Temporary changes in DWS – Samina to serve as Center for Health Practice Administrator for 3-4 months. Kari Salis will serve as Section Manager and Carrie Gentry as Technical Services Manager.
 - Staffing review: 43 staff, 4 from IIJA. Recruitment for 2 positions underway.
 - DWAC origin and purpose. Review of statute and groups represented and governing proceedings. Need 6 members present plus either chair or vice-chair for a quorum.
 - Program funding. General funds, federal funds, fees. State funding shortfall expected but unknown at this time. Federal grants: have received Primacy grant. DWS has applied for FY25 SRF grants. Last year of IIJA funding. Turned down IIJA- lead service lines due to lack of interest / need. FY26 SRF bill is awaiting president's signature, expected amounts. Fees: DWS will evaluate fees (plan review, operator certification, cross connection). Legislative concept to move annual backflow fee from statute to OARs.
 - Rules: PFAS – EPA plans to issue a new proposed rule. OR will request a primacy extension. Rules revisions (CCR, significant deficiencies) effective Jan 1, 2026
 - USACE deep drawdowns (Green Peter, Lookout Point). 2025 – concluded with no major issues. 2026 – adding Detroit reservoir. DWS is working with downstream systems to optimize treatment and operations.
 - Performance measures: ~ 30 SDWA PNCs, 50 OVS PNCs. By population, Q4 had over 16,000 people in systems that are PNCs. Historically low. Mike Grimm stated the bar chart makes it look as though we have a lot of systems / population with bad water. He suggests the data is separated by M&R vs health-based. Samina added that these issues are caused by lacking TMF capacity. DWS plans to create more dashboards for data visualization.

- Program goals: 1) getting more labs on CMDP; 2) more data visualization and dashboards; 3) electronic surveys; 4) automate processes; 5) digitizing paper documents; 6) improve display of advisories.
 - Mike Grimm commented that systems would like to query our data for emergency preparedness (seismically capable reservoirs, for example).
 - Capacity goals for 2026: conduct assessments at systems with compliance issues. Identify vulnerabilities during natural disasters and emergencies. DWS hopes to work together with OAWU on assessing and increasing capacity. Mike Grimm's suggestion: target systems with less than 7 employees. Mike also suggests redundancy of supply and interconnections.
 - Discussion of USACE drawdown and OHA role. OHA provided criteria for halting the drawdown operations due to public water system's inability to provide adequate safe drinking water.
- Improving collaboration with partners. Seek opportunities for synergizing efforts by identifying and leveraging resources and expertise.
- Sandra asked if cybersecurity is a goal for DWS. DWS has collaborated with CISA. Oregon has a cybersecurity office outside of DWS and DWS continues to coordinate with them. DWS's emergency preparedness coordinator also . Jason added that OAWU had two cybersecurity circuit riders for a year and a half.
- Craig asked about systems requesting federal funding. Discussed more detail and background on lead service lines in Oregon. Adam Desemple added that a system's disadvantaged status is also a consideration in that a percentage of the funds must be used for disadvantaged systems.
- Kari discussed the options to adopt the LCRI:
 - 1) Adopt the LCRI in 2026 alongside the LCR with clear dates of which rules apply during which dates. Remove old LCR language by end of 2027.
 - 2) Adopt LCRI in 2026 with some requirements taking effect upon adoption and major elements delayed to Nov 1, 2027.
 - 3) Adopt LCRI by reference in 2026. In 2027, add federal language to OARs and remove LCR language.
 - 4) Adopt LCRI ~ September 2027 with time to receive interim Primacy by November 1, 2027.

- 5) Adopt LCRI on normal schedule in 2027, implement for 2+ months under a primacy extension agreement.
- After considerable discussion, the committee agreed that Option 4 was the best option. If new information emerges and that won't work, Option 3 is the second-best option. Mike Grimm made a motion to approve, and Mike Masters seconded.
- Kari discussed high nitrate at Oregon very small systems. Our current rule does not require mitigation. DWS is considering whether to keep the rules as-is, allow up to 20 ppm for non-community systems per SDWA, or require mitigation but allow flexible options. Mike Mathews expressed the challenges of requiring something small systems can't afford or too many rules that DWS is not able to consistently apply them.
- Kari also noted that with centralized treatment, 48% treating for nitrate have exceeded the nitrate MCL even with treatment. 73% of systems treating for arsenic (similar treatment) have exceeded the MCL after treatment was installed.
- OAWU update
 - Training center in Independence OR is almost complete. Focus on small utilities. Leadership, apprenticeship, open to suggestions on training topics. Hands on training also. \$2M.
 - Received \$1M for training and circuit riders.
 - Needs assessment for small systems was completed within first 6 months when assigned. Shared with DWS (Tony?) but more collaboration needed.
 - Samina pointed out that OAWU can provide technical assistance to OVS systems.
- CMDP update, Michelle
 - Overview of DMCE unit and role – receives and enters all data, determines compliance, issues violations, maintains Data Online website.
 - Received > 80,000 data reports. 60,000+ coliform samples, plus operational reports.
 - Most data currently comes in through email with pdfs. Some through mail and fax. Would like to increase use of data portal for digital reporting.
 - Working with labs to be able to use CMDP. Increases data accuracy, completeness, and efficiency. EPA maintains CMDP.

- Reporting options: XML, Excel, or manual (at labs).
- Labs can register for pre-production (test) environment. Resources are available for labs to assist in using CMDP. EPA provides templates for reporting (on DWS website).
- Next steps: more outreach to labs on using CMDP, review existing rules (some states require use of CMDP).
- Action Items and next steps:
 - DWS to share pdfs of all presentations.
 - Next meeting: April 15th
 - Suggested agenda items? None at this time.