

beyond this governor’s term. In light of that, they suggested an effort be made to consider how to maintain the leadership commitment and momentum. Consistent and sustained engagement of the legislature was viewed by many as a way to help ensure durability of the effort despite political changes.

Community leadership. Public education and bringing people in to help shape the vision and describe needs at a regional or community level were identified as key roles for community leadership. Community leadership is important to ensure that local communities are informed, engaged, and supportive to help a statewide effort. Meaningful community engagement is necessary to help build cohesive and intentional strategies and support for investments.

Tribal leadership. Some interviewees suggested that tribes are critical leaders in this effort because of their deep knowledge and cultural ties to water. As resource experts who also have ancestral ties to the water systems in Oregon, they should be called upon for their leadership in shaping Oregon’s water vision.

SCOPE

Many interviewees were unclear about the scope of the 100-year vision. They were unsure whether the vision is exclusively about creating funding and targeting investments or whether the effort would also consider fundamental changes to how Oregon approaches water policy and governance, as well as funding. Many were concerned that narrowing the focus to exclude policy topics would limit opportunities for innovation, local flexibility, and, ultimately, the success of the vision. This concern was countered with a caution that many water policy topics historically are polarizing and could stymie efforts to bring people together to build an investment strategy for Oregon’s water future. While many agreed that a long-range vision is needed to create an identifiable objective to orient investments and activities in the state, they also felt that the 100-year timeframe posed challenges due to uncertainty and complexity around the changing environmental and political conditions over time. A common suggestion was to establish a 100-year vision, but undertake the work and planning in, for example, five- or twenty-year increments.

FRAMING AROUND EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Interviewees raised equity and inclusion as important considerations for how this effort is framed. One suggested approach to framing was for communities to lead in developing and defining the 100-Year Water Vision for Oregon, in order to foster ownership and a shared mission. In this scenario, the state has a different but unique role in carrying that vision forward. Regardless of the specific process approach, many suggested refining the water vision frame to clearly define the role of community and the role of government, in order to help clarify parameters and scope.

INCLUSION AND ENGAGEMENT WILL BE A PILLAR OF SUCCESS

There is a strong call for inclusion and engagement in this effort given the ecological, geo-spatial, socio-political, and economic complexity of water issues. Without exception, interviewees expressed a desire that they and their constituencies be engaged in the water vision effort. Many described the importance of community-level engagement to ensure that solutions are not just political, but can work for those who will need to implement them. Many gave a particular focus to disproportionately impacted communities and the need to engage them in the vision effort—a focus that may require alternative means of engagement that work for traditionally under-heard and underserved groups. There was an acknowledgment from many that expertise from policy makers and professionals would also play an important role, particularly given the complexity of water issues in Oregon. There was a caution to be intentional about how the process gets organized to support a shift away from positional, polarizing conflicts and more toward integrated, collaborative visioning and strategy planning. Some suggested that careful consideration of *who* represents various needs and interests is as important as getting the needs and interests into the discussion. For some, the Integrated Water Resources Strategy laid a good foundation and is a good example of inclusive and comprehensive strategy building. Others felt that the strategy’s process left some voices out, which suggests a need for broader inclusion and even a reorientation to center work around those who bear a disproportionate amount of burden and negative impact.

NEED FOR EARLY PROGRESS AND PARALLEL SUCCESSES

How the state endeavors to make large, long-term investments of resources (staffing, funding, and overall focus on water), while also supporting current and ongoing needs and efforts, was a major concern for many interviewees. Current ongoing needs that some interviewees feared would be put on hold to redirect attention to the water vision included the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board’s Focused Investment Partnerships, Oregon Water Resources Department grants for Place Based Planning, infrastructure studies and projects, monitoring efforts, and other funding streams and investments in existing programs, including staffing within agencies. They suggested that current water-related efforts should be assessed and addressed alongside long-term planning efforts, and should have a clear place within the vision. This approach could allay fears and garner more support from stakeholders. They also suggested that a more clearly framed concept, with some demonstrated commitment from leaders, could create certainty that the engagement in a 100-Year Water Vision is worthwhile for stakeholders.

GOVERNANCE

Many interviewees wondered whether the vision process would examine and potentially reshape Oregon’s approach to water investments and suggested that this would be an important, albeit complex, undertaking. While an increase in water investment was seen by most as fundamentally important, addressing how decisions about investments are made was viewed as an opportunity to significantly increase the impact of a water vision effort. While Oregon Consensus did not explicitly solicit input on a potential governance structure (or an approach for identifying and prioritizing water investments), a number of

interviewees raised the topic. It was common for interviewees to suggest that a process should be consistent while also allowing for local and regional particulars, garnering both local and state level input, and engaging disproportionately-impacted communities. Interviewees also noted that any new approach to water investment decision making should factor in existing priorities and water efforts currently underway or planned under the current system.

EDUCATION ABOUT WATER IS NEEDED

The public and decision makers need to be educated about the importance of investing in a 100-year water vision. Interviewees called out a general lack of shared understanding about Oregon's current and future water challenges. Many noted that localized crises (Salem algae bloom, Warm Springs Reservation infrastructure failure, Harney Basin groundwater shortages) heightened public awareness about the importance of investing in water, but that, in general, the broader public does not see water as a major concern or problem. Many interviewees described the public as expecting clean water to flow from the taps, but lacking awareness of the infrastructure and processes that afford that access. Interviewees described a lack of public understanding of the vulnerability of Oregon's water future due to population and climate shifts as well as a difference between western and eastern Oregonian's thoughts about the availability of water. This lack of public awareness led many interviewees to suggest that for the 100-year water vision to be successful, a significant investment in public education about water is necessary.

STATE LEVEL COORDINATION IS KEY

Many interviewees raised issues around a perceived lack of coordination and integration across state agencies that are all responsible for water-related topics. Among the issues raised were leadership, policy coordination, data sharing, and communication. For some, the 100-year water vision presents an opportunity to improve engagement and integration across agencies, as well as improve relationships between state government and local (often rural and underserved) communities. However, for others there was skepticism that true integration would actually occur given the history, scope, and scale of this endeavor. Some pointed to the lack of clear engagement of all the natural resource agencies as a signal of a lack of alignment. Some interviewees identified Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's lack of visible leadership in the water vision effort as an example of lack of alignment.

RESOURCES AND POLITICAL WILL

Interviewees suggested that, given the importance of planning for and investment in Oregon's water future, it was critical that the water vision effort be successful. To succeed, it would need sufficient resources and strategy to overcome many likely challenges. Many interviewees concluded that, if there were insufficient resources (i.e. funding and staffing support), time, political will, or shared desire across diverse sectors, it would likely be better to postpone launching a large water vision undertaking. They suggested that

initiating an effort of this magnitude could likely “only be done once and if it fails it would be very challenging to get a redo.” While the results of this assessment suggest that there is generally a shared interest across sectors to see a vision move forward, questions remain regarding the resources and political initiative to move an effort of this magnitude forward at this time. It is worth noting that many interviewees also suggested that if a full water vision effort were not undertaken, significant needs within the water arena remain, including public education about water and Oregon’s water future, improved investment in existing programs, data analysis, and other needs.

DATA AND INFORMATION

When asked about data and information, many interviewees said that gaps exist. One of the most commonly cited examples was the need for instream flow data. However, many also suggested that the current state of knowledge is adequate to proceed so long as investments in data gathering—monitoring and analysis—continue to be included in the vision and related investment opportunities. Interviewees suggested that data gathering should continue to be a part of the water strategy but should not inhibit progress on meeting water vision goals. Another consistent theme was around coordinating data. Many data sets exist within agencies or communities but are not integrated or accessible to show a more holistic view. Consistent standards, approaches, and methodologies and a compiled repository for all sources were recommended. Many also suggested that if additional data were to be gathered as a part of the vision effort that it would be important to first come to an agreement on why data would be gathered and how it would be used. Others suggested that a methodology to allow information and data generated by users should be developed as a part of the vision process.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM EXPERIENCE SHOULD INFORM THIS EFFORT

In addition to the specific challenges and needs conveyed, participants offered general process advice, often based on lessons learned from experience, which they hoped would be considered in this effort. Oregon Consensus has taken this advice into consideration in developing the process considerations described below. In addition, a more complete list of programs, projects, and other experiences the interviewees offered as resources for this effort were shared as a separate document with the Governor’s Office staff working on the water vision, and process advice is included in Appendix IV of this document.

FEEDBACK ON THE VISION STATEMENT

During the interviews Oregon Consensus solicited feedback on the vision statement, including the goals and problem statement. A synthesis of interviewees’ feedback was provided directly to the state from Oregon Consensus as they considered revisions to the vision statement. Repeated and overarching feedback from the interviews about the vision, goals, and problem statement suggested that framing is important as an indicator of who is included in the vision and what types of investments are important for Oregon’s water future. Many interviewees expressed positive feedback around the inclusiveness, tone, long-term view, and intention-setting behind the vision. Others expressed concerns about the vision being overly broad, so as to be vague and unfocused. One interviewee said, “I am excited about it, but I don’t know what it means.”

Many said they were confused about the intended scale and scope of this effort. Some wondered if the vision had changed over time and, if so, how it would currently be framed. Put simply: Is this vision an effort toward getting a funding package passed, or are we considering fundamental changes to how Oregon’s water funding, policy, and future looks? These two purposes were viewed as having different scopes and requiring different approaches.

Many appreciated that shifts in climate and population dynamics are core drivers for the vision. However, at least one interviewee noted that a climate change frame heightened divisions, given the politics around climate policy. Others noted that equity and environmental justice concerns were missing and that tribal rights and traditional uses were not described sufficiently to meet tribal interests. Other common critiques of the draft vision were that in-stream water, recreation, and health needs were not clearly articulated as goals, and that current successes (e.g., land use laws and on-the-ground projects) were not obvious goals or elements of the vision.

Several interviewees read the vision as a prioritization of issues and varied in their interpretation about which water needs appeared to have higher priority over others. This perception raised a concern for interviewees that this vision was in some way attempting to indicate priorities. To illustrate, a common comparison was made between *built* and *natural* infrastructure. Some felt that natural infrastructure looked like an afterthought or that there was uncertainty about the breadth of natural infrastructure that was meant by the term. Some interviewees suggested that the use of the term infrastructure limits the ability to focus on water-related topics more broadly, that is, broader ecosystem issues.

OREGON CONSENSUS PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS

The people interviewed for this assessment offered thoughtful and genuine responses to the interview questions. They generally agree that Oregon needs to take a long-range view to create a water vision, and that a critical opportunity exists to develop a coordinated, actionable plan for Oregon’s water future. Set in the context of a changing environment that includes population and climate shifts as well as aging infrastructure, all of which impact Oregon’s water systems, the state should lead and work in partnership with others to define a meaningful vision. Based on that vision, the state should set out to build a cohesive framework for investments.

Oregon Consensus heard that it was in almost everyone’s, if not everyone’s, best interests to proactively set the course for Oregon’s water future. On behalf of those interviewed, and based on the findings, we offer the following recommendations and suggestions to consider as the water vision effort moves forward.

- ❖ *Articulate a clear objective.* Address scope, scale, and framing questions. Start with clarity around the objectives of this process. It would be beneficial to articulate what

the state, as the initiator of the water vision, would like to achieve through the vision effort. The state's thinking could, and should, be shaped by the feedback it has received. Parties would also benefit from clarity at the outset of the process as to side boards for this state-led effort. For example, many parties continue to wonder whether the vision is just about water funding or whether a broader suite of issues will be discussed.

- ❖ *Demonstrate state government commitment and leadership.* This happens in the form of initial investments to organize and move the process forward, clarity around roles of state leadership, and reflecting this initial round of input in a revised vision statement.
- ❖ *Engage communities.* Develop a concept for co-creation of a long-term plan with communities and stakeholders. Concurrent efforts are happening now (and likely will continue) to gather input on water vision issues. Given this fact and an expressed desire from many to continue to engage in a state process as well as independently engage their public and their constituencies, the state should invest time and resources in working with community and tribal leadership for meaningful, inclusive engagement.
- ❖ *Craft a public education strategy.* An effort should be made to educate Oregonians about the current and prospective status of water in Oregon and the importance of investing and planning for shifting conditions. Such an effort would encourage decision makers and the public to become informed and active participants in enabling the success of a long-term water vision for Oregon.
- ❖ *Seek cross-sector representation:* If a group is convened to move the vision forward, it should be composed of cross-sector participants who have a genuine interest in shaping Oregon's water future and a desire to participate in good faith efforts to achieve multiple objectives through a collaborative effort.
- ❖ *Address values and interests.* Interviewees were generous in sharing their ideas about the conditions and needs of Oregon's built and natural infrastructure as well as how to move a water vision forward practically. It was notable, however, that most interviewees expressed their positions, *what* they want to see as an outcome, but few shared their interests, *why* they desire a particular outcome. There is a co-learning opportunity within the vision process to engage parties that are directly involved in water-related work to educate each other on the values and interests that motivate their work. While such efforts do not always result in agreement, they do tend to foster understanding and ultimately can lead to relationship building, which will be critical in solving contentious water issues.
- ❖ *Clarify decision-making roles.* If a group is convened to advance the water vision, it is important that there be agreement up front on what, if any, decision-making role the group has. If the group will have a decision-making role, then clarity about how decisions are to be made (e.g., by consensus or not) will be critical.

❖ *Additional process design considerations.* Based on Oregon Consensus' experience working on complex public policy issues, and on process suggestions from interviewees, Oregon Consensus offers the following guidance in the event that a group is convened to advance the water vision effort.

- Set a clear purpose and side boards that everyone understands. This allows for time needed to establish process structure, which will support the group working through very complex and contentious issues. "Go slow to go fast."
- Jointly develop group norms and ways of doing collaboration (including information gathering, sharing and dialogue, decision making, and communicating outside the group.) Norms often show up in a charter or operating principles, which are codified by the group at the outset.
- Select a convener who is considered a trusted, collaborative leader to work in everyone's best interests toward a common good. Their primary role is to move issues and process forward.
- Enlist a facilitator who operates as a third party, independent process expert who has no substantive stake in the outcome and who can guide the group through an agreement-seeking effort.
- Create methods and channels for learning. Provide technical and other information sources to support the group's learning through different mediums (written, oral presentations, experiential).

Organizations Interviewed

- Affiliated Tribes of the Northwest Indians
- American Whitewater Association
- Association of Clean Water Agencies
- Association of Oregon Counties
- Beyond Toxics
- Business Oregon
- Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts
- Columbia Riverkeepers (written feedback)
- Confederated tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians
- Confederated tribes of the Grand Ronde
- Family Farm Alliance
- Farmers Conservation Alliance
- Ford Family Foundation
- Freshwater Trust
- Harney County Place Based Water Planning
- Health Policy Board
- John Day Place Based Water Planning
- League of Oregon Cities
- League of Women Voters
- Meyer Memorial Trust
- Mid-Coast Place Based Water Planning
- Mid-Columbia Drainage District
- Network of Oregon Watershed Councils
- Northeast Oregon Water Association
- Northwest Regional Floodplain Management Association
- Office of Emergency Management
- Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
- Oregon Association of Nurseries
- Oregon Association of Water Utilities
- Oregon Business Council
- Oregon Cattlemen’s Association
- Oregon Community Foundation
- Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Department of Forestry
- Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Services
- Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development
- Oregon Department of State Lands
- Oregon Environmental Council
- Oregon Farm Bureau
- Oregon Groundwater Association

- Oregon Health Authority
- Oregon Homebuilders Association
- Oregon Rental Housing Alliance
- Oregon Small Woodlands Association
- Oregon Water Resources Congress
- Oregon Water Utilities Council
- Oregonians for Food and Shelter
- Pinos y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN)
- Resource Legacy Fund
- Special Districts Association of Oregon
- Sustainable Northwest
- The Nature Conservancy
- Trout Unlimited
- Verde
- Water for Life
- Water Watch
- Wild Salmon Center

Organizations that were contacted but did not participate in an interview

- American Society of Civil Engineers
- Central Oregon Health Council
- Coalition of Communities of Color
- Farmworkers Housing Development
- Housing Oregon
- La Grande Place Based Water Planning
- Manufactured Housing Communities of Oregon
- Northwest Environmental Advocates
- NW Health Foundation
- NW Pulp and Paper
- Oregon Affordable Housing Management Association
- Oregon Association of Outfitters and Guides
- Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
- Oregon Forest Industries Council
- Oregon Rental Housing Association

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell us about yourself and your organization's history and connection to water.
2. How does the vision sit with you? How does this vision align or not align with what you value? Do you see yourself/your constituencies in it?
3. Are there any goals that you do not share or any goals missing from this vision?
4. Do you see your concerns articulated in the problem statement? Why or why not?
5. What would success look like to you? What happens if the status quo continues?
6. Where do you see the biggest challenges or barriers to achieving the success you just described? Do you have suggestions for how they could be overcome?
7. Are there information, data, or other technical resource needs (sources of data and resources) that you think should be addressed, utilized, and considered as part of informing a water vision effort?
8. Are there lessons learned from past processes or similar undertakings that you think could be helpful in considering a water vision process?
9. If a water vision effort moves forward, what should engagement look like for your constituencies and the broader public?
10. Who else should we be talking with?
11. Anything you wanted us to ask that we didn't?

APPENDIX III: TECHNICAL DATA REQUESTS

The following is a summary of interviewee responses to the question: “Are there information, data, or other technical resource needs (sources of data and resources) that you think should be addressed, utilized, and considered as part of informing a water vision effort?”

- Traditional ecological knowledge
- Economic impacts of investing or divesting in water infrastructure (built and natural), economic value of water quality, ecosystem health
- Groundwater availability and use, aquifer mapping
- Instream flows and needs/demand forecasts
- Groundwater/surface water interactions
- Floodplain status and risks
- Toxics monitoring
- Gaps in wastewater system that could be filled by natural infrastructure
- Ground truth models
- Water supply for individual farms, opportunities for conservation
- Private forest riparian rules monitoring
- Water funding needs
- Election database on water-related topics to inform understanding of public’s perceptions and appetite
- Inventory of access to waterways
- Understanding water quality impacts from western Oregon checkerboard extractive resources and use
- Sea level rise and impacts to coastal communities
- Fish presence or absence
- Feasibility studies for piping and natural infrastructure on agricultural lands
- Linkages between water supply and quality
- Statewide assessment of water security
- Update flood and sno-tel maps
- Water as a factor of social determinants of health
- Access to clean drinking water—disparities impacting communities of color
- Regional needs/demands
- Agriculture resilience studies
- Instream nutrient information
- How energy efficiencies link to water efficiencies

APPENDIX IV: LESSONS LEARNED AND OTHER SOURCES

The following is a summary of interviewee responses to the question “Are there lessons learned from past processes or similar undertakings that you think could be helpful in considering a water vision process?” Suggestions were taken into consideration as Oregon Consensus developed its process suggestions. In addition, some interviewees provided documents and information that they felt could be helpful. Oregon Consensus has transmitted these to the Governor’s Office staff working on the water vision.

Governance

- Look at other successful blue ribbon task forces.
- Gather a “coalition of the willing” to move this forward.
- Include all responsible agencies; de-silo and show linkages and unique responsibilities of each. Include Business Oregon.

Leadership

- To achieve success, include political leadership and doers.
- Acknowledge that personalities matter. The right mindset and commitment are needed for the long haul.
- Rethink who is leadership and how to connect the leadership dots between the state and community.
- Know and work with the decision makers as you start.

Messaging

- Gain clarity around what people are trying to achieve through the water vision and the parameters of the playing field. Be clear about process and goals.
- Show the urgency of the water strategy; Sometimes, action comes through crisis.
- Describe the effort as a cooperative funding endeavor and less like a mandate to get community buy-in.
- Know who could lose up front and address that concern.

Engagement

- Foster shared learning among stakeholders and responsible agencies around challenges and opportunities.
- Be aware of the challenge of power disparities and eleventh-hour deals from outside lobbying groups.
- Look for examples of demonstrated commitment to include tribal communities and other communities of color, and the resulting successes from those efforts.
- Ensure broad engagement, which results in more ownership of the issues and commitment to success.
- Recognize that trusting and solid partnerships are important.
- Look for examples where positive engagement and momentum and buy-in led to long-term permanent funding.
- Use the legislative process for fair, inclusive engagement.

- Be inclusive and transparent *and* keep squeaky wheels from dominating or stalling.
- When some community voices feel outmatched they do not consider themselves included. Make the process a means not an end.

Process approach

- Use a sustainability model or tool for decision making.
- Don't confine local communities to a box. Don't follow strict lines. The state should help locals lead.
- Use the transportation package as a funding strategy.
- Examine the approach of other states that have successful water plans.
- Use professional facilitation; it is critical.
- Make this a bipartisan effort, including work with federal agencies.
- Be more inclusive than the Integrated Water Resources Strategy.
- Take a stepwise approach to the strategy.
- Build trust through pilot projects and shared goals.