

High Level Findings of a Mid-Process Place-Based Water Planning Survey

Purpose

This survey was conducted on behalf of place-based water planning groups and provides input to the conveners of those teams as they chart the next phase of their work. It includes a mid-process check to assist the planning groups understand interim outcomes and areas where additional support may be needed to ensure success.

Methods

The online survey was developed by the Oregon Community Partnership with the support of the Oregon Community Foundation. The survey included a mix of open-ended questions and questions using the Likert scale. The survey included questions about the process and substance of the planning work. Individual sampling was used and targeted current members of the four planning groups. The survey was distributed through email to planning group members. Each of the planning groups sent it to a different subset of their membership:

- Harney sent it to its Coordinating Committee
- Mid-Coast sent it to those who signed their charter
- John Day sent it to their entire stakeholder list
- Upper Grande Ronde sent it to their entire stakeholder list

In all there were 60 respondents to the survey.

High Level Findings

- Overall responses represented a broad cross-section of stakeholders.
- 78% agree or strongly agree on the key drivers for water planning and that this is the right time to do place-based water planning. Examples of those key drivers include: balancing competing needs, understanding current and future needs, agricultural needs, climate change, and water shortages.
- 83% of participants believe that the combination of their conveners and facilitators provided a neutral forum for the planning work.
- 61% of participants believe there is a good balance of interests on the groups and there were many suggestions that more could be done to reach out to specific groups that are unrepresented.

- While there is a strong feeling that the governance agreements have been helpful, there is a split between those who agree and those who neither agree or disagree about whether it is clear about how ultimate decisions will be made.
- There is a large amount of agreement (90%) that participants have come to understand the interests of others on the group as well as a belief that other members understand their interests (70%).
- While 51% of participants believe their group has experienced conflict, they also generally feel optimistic that differences can be worked through in the group. In addition, they have important suggestions on how to improve the groups' processes.
- There is a general feeling that more could be done to reach out to external parties and the public while understanding the limitations on being able to do so.
- A majority of participants either disagree or neither agree or disagree that their group has enough resources to complete their work together, but a majority say they have enough resources to continue their own participation.
- The majority of participants believe they have made contributions to the reports, materials and information produced by the group. 27% believe they have made significant contributions; 30% some contributions; 22% minor contributions. Only 10% believe they have not contributed.
- Over 2/3 of participants believe they have already benefited from being part of the process and have given specific examples--many of which relate to gaining a greater understanding and awareness of water issues, improved communication and the development of productive relationships.
- 69% believe that the process will lead to solutions that balance water needs and uses, but the specific outcomes of the process are not clear to a majority of the participants.
- Most all participants can identify a specific project that they believe would be a good outcome of the process.
- In identifying the biggest barriers in achieving outcomes, 75% say it is the lack of funding and over half say the lack of capacity to do the work of the group.
- Most all participants have read the DRAFT Place-Based Planning Guidelines provided by the Water Resources Department but only half agree they provide sufficient information to develop an integrated water resources plan.
- Less than half the participants believe they have the right technical information to complete the plan at this point.
- Generally, participants believe the process could be greatly improved if the Water Resources Department could provide more funding, technical assistance, and greater access to information.

In the mid-process survey all respondents (n=60) indicated that they had benefited from the process so far, including the following benefits:

Greater understanding of specific water resources issues	75.44%
Greater awareness within the region of our shared water challenges	71.93%
Improved communication and information sharing around water	70.18%
New relationships with water partners I otherwise would not have met	68.42%
New perspectives on water-related issues, challenges, and opportunities facing our region	66.67%
Greater understanding of water resources in general	64.91%
Improved relationships with water partners	63.16%
Greater awareness within the region of the water challenges I face	56.14%
Greater access to technical information	50.88%
A sense of community and camaraderie around water	49.12%
Greater coordination on water-related activities	40.35%
Reduced conflict and increasing cooperation around water issues	35.09%
Help from partner(s) to accomplish a water-related task or project	31.58%
Greater access to funding to help me with water related work	22.81%

Respondents indicated that they still faced the following barriers:

Lack of sufficient funding	72.41%
Not enough capacity to do the work	51.72%
Lack of public awareness and support	43.10%
Internal conflict between partners	34.48%
Not enough time to do the work	29.31%
Not focused enough	29.31%
Lack of data/information to support decision-making	27.59%
Lack of support from partners	27.59%
Lack of support from decision-makers	24.14%
Lack of good facilitation or conflict resolution	8.62%

Summary

In general, the survey provides a snapshot of the needs and benefits as well as areas for improvement to support place-based water planning. Each place-based planning group has particular successes, challenges and opportunities that can be gleaned from each set of surveys. The convener(s) and their staff can use the individual group responses to plan for the next phase of their work. We want to thank all who participated in the survey for their important contribution to our collective understanding and assistance in making place-based water planning a success in Oregon.