

Consortium Technical Committee Meeting Summary

JUNE 17, 2020 CALLED TO ORDER: 1:32 PM ADJOURNED: 3:18 PM
QUORUM PRESENT - YES - 15 MEMBERS
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM/VIDEOCONFERENCE



Approval of January 8 and April 1, 2020 Meeting Summaries

Brian Stahl made a motion to approve the January 8 and April 1, 2020 Consortium Technical Committee (CTC) meeting summaries. Mike Grimm seconded the motion. The CTC unanimously approved the January 8 and April 1, 2020 CTC meeting summaries as presented. (15:0:0)

COVID-19 Tracking Project

Mark Jockers, Government & Public Affairs Director from Clean Water Services (CWS) joined the CTC meeting to give an update on work they are doing tracking disease through wastewater. CWS is collaborating on several research projects to track COVID-19 in sewage to help public health officials detect the presence and scope of the virus in a community. Using new analytical techniques, researchers are able to find evidence of the virus at the neighborhood scale, which could provide an early warning sign of the virus in a community. Mark gave a brief overview of the various projects CWS is currently collaborating on:

- Oregon State University (OSU) College of Engineering – Studying weekly samples from 20 sites within the CWS wastewater collection system taken over a 52-week period, the project is funded by the National Science Foundation.
- OSU Colleges of Public Health and Human Sciences, Science, Veterinary Medicine, and Agricultural Sciences, TRACE Program – Testing sewage for signals of COVID-19 in Corvallis and Bend, compare with spatial and temporal virus signals in communities.
- Oregon Health & Science University – Working to correlate public health tracing (symptomatic and asymptomatic infections, antibodies) results with sewage tracking results in Hillsboro, Portland and Lake Oswego.
- Oregon Health Authority – Proposal to expand OSU/CWS research to 30 treatment plants in Oregon over a two-year period to track the spread, recession and any potential new waves of COVID-19 infections.

- CWS is also participating in a 12-week national study led by MIT spin-off Biobot Analytics. Samples are collected weekly from our four water resource recovery facilities to be analyzed. The analytical techniques used in the studies, allows researchers to look for signs of the virus in sewage, not the virus itself. To date, the scientific community has found no evidence of viable COVID-19 virus in wastewater.

Director's Report

Rebecca Geisen, Consortium Managing Director noted that the presentation that was planned for this meeting from the Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) has been deferred to a future CTC meeting. Rebecca advised that the NRCS is looking to designate high priority source water protection areas by the end of September in which it anticipates targeting future deployment of conservation funds. NRCS is looking for water provider partners. Rebecca said in the interim, she would share some resources from the NRCS and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) via email on the process and how to engage with these organizations.

Rebecca reported that the Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (ORWARN) Board has invited the Consortium to become a member. Rebecca advised that the Consortium would be a valuable partner for ORWARN and being a member would allow the Consortium to utilize ORWARN resources. The Board would need to approve membership and sign the IGA. There is no cost for membership. The CTC agreed that becoming a member of ORWARN would be beneficial and recommended bringing it to the Executive Committee at their meeting in September.

Rebecca mentioned that the University of Washington's (UW) Climate Impacts Group is engaging staff and operators in the water sector in the broader Northwest region (WA, OR, ID, AK) in a series of conversations about how to plan and prepare for the impacts of climate change. This will include several focus group calls in July, followed by a series of webinars in early August, which will include trainings on how to access and use regionally relevant climate data and tools. As a result, UW has sent out a survey to help tailor the sessions to fit the needs and interests of participants. They are interested in hearing from water utilities and operators of all kinds—including drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and combined utilities—and are hoping to hear from small- to medium-sized utilities (serving populations <200,000) but that all are welcome to fill out the survey. Rebecca advised that she will be filling out the survey on behalf on the Consortium and encouraged CTC members to fill it out as well to share how their entity uses climate change information, the challenges associated with that, and their interests in some online sessions on this topic. Rebecca said the survey only takes about five minutes to complete.

Rebecca advised that Consortium staff has made the necessary adjustments to the FY 2020-21 budget and work plan based on the outcomes of June Board meeting. The FY 2020-21 Consortium dues spreadsheet has been updated to reflect the adjustments. Dues letters and invoices will go out to members the first part of July. Rebecca advised that the Board successfully participated in Zoom

breakout rooms to elect new County Executive Committee members and elected Chair Fagin and Vice Chair Manz for a second term. Rebecca said there will be an Executive Committee vacancy at the end of the calendar year as Councilor Tom Anderson from the City of Tigard is running for a seat on the Metro Council so will no longer be with the City of Tigard. Rebecca noted that Board members seemed engaged during the virtual Zoom meeting and some expressed interest in continuing to meet virtually even after the pandemic is over.

CTC members will elect a new Chair and Vice-Chair at their meeting in September. Current Chair and Vice-Chair, Degner and Pak respectively are completing their first year in office and are eligible for re-election if so nominated.

Rebecca reported that the RDPO/RWPC Provision of Emergency Drinking Water Framework Plan Request for Proposal (RFP) will be going out soon. Rebecca asked if CTC members know of a consultant that might be interested in the work to let her know and she can direct them to the RFP.

The Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the Drinking Water Advisory Tool have been updated. These updated documents will be sent to all of the DWA tool administrators and will be embedded as resources in the tool itself.

Rebecca shared that the Portland State University's Population Research Center has completed the 2019 population and household estimates for each Consortium member. Rebecca sent out email that included instructions on how to access the files located on the Consortium file share site.

Rebecca mentioned that ORWARN has approximately 450 non-contact thermometers. Contact Rebecca or Chris Wanner, Operations Director for the Portland Water Bureau if interested in receiving some.

Rebecca advised that the Water Research Foundation had a webinar today on AWIA-lessons learned. Rebecca will share the presentation slides with CTC members.

Program Updates

Bonny Cushman, Consortium Program Coordinator shared information on a recent presentation she participated in from the Energy Trust of Oregon on their Strategic Energy Management (SEM) Program. The SEM program is a year-long cohort training program of approximately 10-12 organizations that are committed to saving energy through continuous improvement practices and willing to implement no-and low-cost projects during the year-long engagement. Throughout the year, the cohort participates in workshops that train staff and empower employees to identify and reduce energy waste; clarifies organizational energy goals and priorities; engages and empower employees to reduce energy waste in their work area; uses diagnostic business tools and templates to identify waste

in systems; and measures, tracks and reports on energy intensity, savings and performance. The SEM program has had specific water industry cohorts and could be a good way to identify and learn how water providers can save energy in their own day-to-day operations and how they can move water around the region while streamlining energy use. Bonny noted that if this program is something CTC members would like to learn more about, she can arrange to have program representatives participate in a future CTC meeting to provide more information. It was decided that Bonny will send out more information about the program in a follow-up email and those that are interested in learning more can reach out to Energy Trust directly.

Summer Supply Discussion

Clackamas River – record flows on the Clackamas River past several days, river is running high right now, flows have been a bit up and down.

Bull Run – higher than normal rainfall in May/June, reservoirs are very full, not in drawdown yet.

Trask/Tualatin – Hagg Lake pretty close to full; Scoggins 95.5 % full, Barney reservoir did fill, currently 90% full.

CTC members decided July and August summer supply check-in calls would be beneficial and to continue with the standard summer conservation and the water is safe to drink messaging.

COVID-19 Response – Report Out

CTC members discussed when they are planning to have employees return to the office and what re-entry plans entail. Consortium member entities have suspended late fees and shutoffs during COVID-19. Some have seen record number of accounts that would be in shutoff status if not for the decision to suspend them. Consortium members spent some time discussing the suitability, process and potential timeline for reaching out to customers proactively and to resume shutoff policies. CTC members also discussed timing for opening offices to walk-in customers. No providers at this time have plans to resume walk-in services. All Consortium member entities reported that they plan to continue holding public meetings virtually for the foreseeable future.

Clackamas River Water:

- Plans to reassess shut off moratorium in July; discussions happening at Board level on status of delinquent accounts and effects on revenue.

Oak Lodge Water Services:

- Commercial water usage is down, residential water usage has increased; payments are coming in slower during the pandemic.

City of Beaverton:

- Have not seen that many delinquent accounts. Has not been an issue yet.

City of Tualatin:

- Delinquency has not become an issue yet; approximately 200 accounts in shutoff status.

Tualatin Valley Water District:

- Water sales have increased slightly; have not yet seen negative revenue impacts as a result of suspending shutoffs but expect it to come.

West Slope Water District:

- Shutoff moratorium on agenda for next Board meeting – how to separate those customers that are impacted by the pandemic and not able to pay from those customers who have the means to pay their bill but simply are not because they know their water will not be shut off.
- Oregon legislative special session may address state-wide freeze on shutoffs for non-payment and rate increases.
- Water demand is very reliant on weather.

City of Tigard:

- Will credit \$40 per month if unemployed person in household and will receive credit until December 2020; shutoff moratorium will remain in place until then as well.

City of Lake Oswego:

- Not seeing many financial changes/impacts due to COVID-19; thus far delinquency similar to levels prior to pandemic; developing customer communications on payment options for customers having difficulty paying bill.
- Water demands have not substantially changed.

Rockwood Water PUD:

- Seeing more customers not paying their bill with more repeat customers not paying, trying to reach out to those customers first to make payment arrangements.

City of Hillsboro:

- Have seen increase in number of customers going to 120 days past due.
- Utility Services Committee making phone calls to customers regarding non-payment and making payment arrangements.
- Have approximately 50 multifamily properties not paying bill due to not receiving rent from tenants.
- New emergency assistance program beginning July 1.

City of Gresham:

- Have not seen any real impacts on revenue yet due to the pandemic. Holding shutoff

moratorium steady until at least August; currently have 700 accounts in shutoff status. Utility billing representatives reaching out to delinquent customers to make payment arrangements.

City of Newberg:

- City Hall opened this week by appointment only; most staff still working remotely.
- Current plan to return to office around Labor Day; face coverings will be required in shared work spaces; employees will be required to do self-temperature checks prior to reporting to work.

Sunrise Water Authority:

- SWA Board is in no rush to return to in-person meetings. Will continue virtual meetings for the foreseeable future.
- Several years ago, SWA developed an extensive remote-style work plan in which all of SWA could be run from a remote location. As a result, the transition to teleworking during the pandemic was a seamless transition. Only one person in the office at a time to take payments. Billing system, GIS and servers are all in the cloud.

Meeting Attendees:

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| David Winship – City of Beaverton | Todd Heidgerken – Clackamas River Water | Greg Robertson – City of Forest Grove |
| Andrew Degner – City of Gresham | Niki Iverson – City of Hillsboro | Kari Duncan – City of Lake Oswego |
| Kristen Svicarovich – City of Newberg | Sarah Jo Chaplen – Oak Lodge Water Services | Edward Campbell – City of Portland |
| Brian Stahl – Rockwood Water PUD | Rich Sattler – City of Sherwood | Tim Janssen – Sunrise Water Authority |
| John Goodrich – City of Tigard | Jeff Fuchs – City of Tualatin | Carrie Pak – Tualatin Valley Water District |
| Mike Grimm – West Slope Water District | Amy Mireles – Oregon National Guard | Mark Jockers – Clean Water Services |
| Rebecca Geisen, Bonny Cushman, Riley Berger and Patty Burk – RWPC Staff | | |

Next CTC Meeting: Wednesday, September 2, 2020 via *Zoom/videoconference*.