

Annual Report

JULY 2021 - JUNE 2022



REGIONAL WATER PROVIDERS CONSORTIUM





Beaverton, City of
Clackamas River Water
Cornelius, City of
Forest Grove, City of
Gladstone, City of
Gresham, City of
Hillsboro, City of
Lake Oswego, City of
Milwaukie, City of
Newberg, City of
Oak Lodge Water Services
Portland, City of
Raleigh Water District
Rockwood Water PUD
Sandy, City of
Scappoose, City of
Sherwood, City of
South Forth Water Board
Sunrise Water Authority
Tigard, City of
Troutdale, City of
Tualatin, City of
Tualatin Valley Water District
West Slope Water District
Wilsonville, City of

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Portland, OR 97204
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RegionalH2O
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 RegionalH2O

November 2022

This year, we celebrated 25 years as an organization. That is quite an accomplishment!

I am so proud of our members and staff who, over the years, have committed to our mission of “providing leadership in the planning, management, stewardship, and resiliency of drinking water in the Portland metropolitan region.” As a result of our collective work, our region is more prepared to provide drinking water after an emergency, and the public has great tools and information to be good stewards of our water resources. Most importantly, members continue working together around common goals to ensure that the region has a safe and reliable water supply for years to come.

This year’s annual report is organized a bit differently. Our work and strategic plan are still guided by three major focus areas: Meeting Water Needs, Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency, and Strengthening Regional Partnerships. However, for this report, we’ve opted to break the report into themed sections that align with how we do our work: collaboration and partnerships, equity, public outreach, and resiliency. We hope you find this a positive change to how we share the projects we completed over the year.

Please take a moment to reflect on your contribution to the Consortium and its success - we can’t do this work without each of you, our members. I look forward to working with incoming members and staff, and so appreciate those who have blazed this trail with us over the past 25 years.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Geisen
Managing Director



OUR MISSION:

To provide leadership in the planning, management, stewardship, and resiliency of drinking water in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan region.

OUR VALUES:

Consensus

We strive for one voice on matters that impact water providers and our customers.

Collaboration

We explore regional options, partnerships, and mutually beneficial solutions while retaining individual decision-making and accountability to our customers.

Respect

We acknowledge our differences and engage in open, honest, and constructive dialogue.

Stewardship

We advocate for wise management of existing and potential sources of drinking water.

Transparency

We share information openly and are available to our members and the communities we serve.

Resiliency

We support each other and collectively prepare to mitigate for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.

regionalH₂O.org

Introduction

The Regional Water Providers Consortium provides leadership in the planning, management, stewardship, and resiliency of drinking water in the greater Portland, Oregon metropolitan region.

Our three major focus areas are:

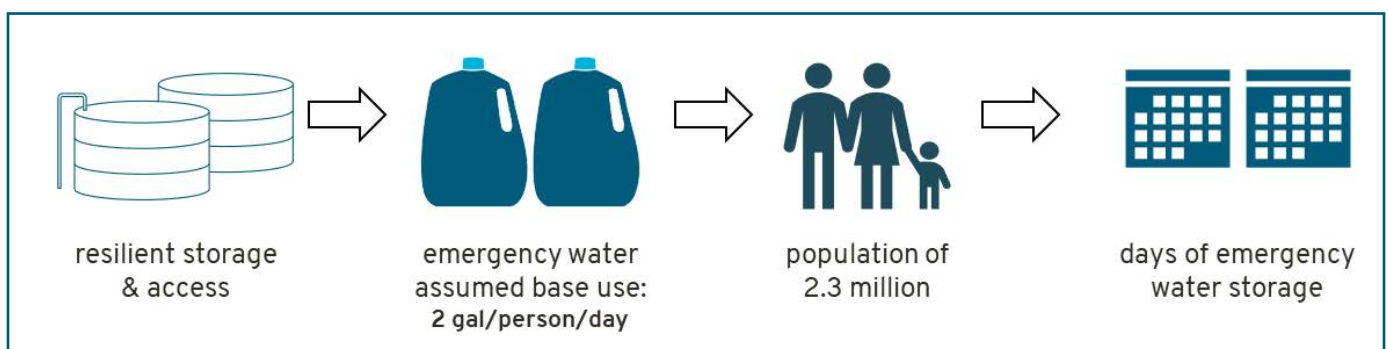
- Meeting water needs
- Emergency preparedness and resiliency
- Strengthening regional partnerships

This past year, we began transitioning back to more normal operations and integrating the many lessons learned from the last two years into our work. We continued to make our emergency preparedness and conservation messages accessible in more languages. We also celebrated 25 years as an organization. The following pages present our work through the lenses of collaboration and partnerships, equity, public outreach, and resiliency.

Summary of Accomplishments

- Completed the foundational work for the regional Emergency Drinking Water Framework project in partnership with the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization
- Conducted three tabletop exercises for Consortium members and regional and state partners that focused on: lessons learned from concurrent events of the past two years; coordinated and accessible communication needs in curtailment scenarios; and initial steps of testing the Emergency Drinking Water Framework Plan
- Finished two phases of the emergency preparedness-focused multilingual how-to video project
- Conducted multimedia campaigns that included messaging in English and Spanish and focused on water conservation, value of water, source water protection, and emergency preparedness
- Collaborated with members, community partners, and contractors to ensure that Consortium messaging, tools, and other resources are more accessible
- Welcomed the City of Scappoose as the 25th member of the Consortium

Planning for Emergency Drinking Water Needs



Collaboration and Partnerships

The Consortium's success is rooted in the collaboration that happens between members and with partners. Together, we support and learn from each other. We also partner with other agencies and organizations to highlight the importance of drinking water, share resources, and foster stewardship of the region's drinking water.

Share information and resources

- **Connected with other state agencies and groups** – Staff from Oregon Department of Energy, Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Emergency Management, and Oregon Water Resources Department participated in Consortium committee meetings and exercises. Consortium staff routinely participate in the Oregon Water Utility Council meetings.
- **Water resource clearinghouse** – Provided resources and guidance to other water providers and agencies throughout Oregon during water scarcity, emergency, or quality events, including in Klamath and Morrow counties
- **Presentations** – Staff presented at five regional and state conferences with information on water-focused personal preparedness and “The Value of Connection” and its importance when responding to emergencies

Collaborate with regional, state, and national partners

- **Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO)** – Engaged in several work groups, subcommittees, projects, and exercises focused on fuel planning, equity, policy, messaging, and programming
- **Oregon Emergency Management (OEM)** – Andrew Phelps, Director of OEM, attended a Consortium Board meeting, shared information about OEM, and addressed recommendations in a joint letter from the Oregon Water Utility Council and Consortium on improved coordination with water utilities.
- **Legislative advocacy** – Prepared a joint letter of support with Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network, Oregon Association of Water Utilities, Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies, and Oregon Water Utility Council for SB 1567 which requires seismic risk assessments for bulk oil and fuel terminals (the bill passed and is now in the rulemaking phase)
- **Workforce development** – Participated in a statewide group focused on creating a “Careers in Water” webpage and increasing recruitment to water sector
- **Consortium member support** – Provided programming, resources, support, onboarding, orientation, and training to several hundred staff
- **Alliance for Water Efficiency** – Contributed to the education working committee and attended regional and annual meetings
- **Clean Rivers Coalition** – Attended the annual forum which focused on the launch of the statewide “Follow the Water” campaign
- **Summer supply planning** – Coordinated opportunities for members to learn about National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's water year projections and for water managers to meet regularly about summer water supply conditions

Equity and Accessibility

Water is our region's number one natural resource. It plays a crucial role in every aspect of our daily lives and is essential to life itself. The Consortium believes embedding equity into planning, programming, and outreach will enhance its ability to better serve our members' goal of providing access to safe drinking water to their customers. This year, our work focused on increasing access to our messaging, tools, and other resources. This helped community members to use water wisely, connect with local water sources, and be better equipped to prepare for, respond to, and rebound from disasters that result in the temporary loss of municipal water supplies.

Embedding equity into our messaging and resources

- **Website** – Completed work on fifty-three different pages and one widget which made regionalH2O.org more accessible for people with low or no vision and who use assistive technologies
- **Social Media** – Used plain language, added alt text to images, and incorporated messaging topics to meet the needs of a broader audience
- **Print materials and other online content** – Worked with community members, water provider staff, partners, and contractors to update and create print materials, promotions, newsletters, and other messaging resources in seven languages
- **Graphics** – Incorporated feedback from eleven community listening sessions into new, simplified emergency preparedness graphics
- **How-to videos** – Collaborated with Community Engagement Liaisons, TZOM Films, and community partners to complete community listening sessions, script development, and filming of how-to videos in seven languages
- **Media Campaigns** – Partnered with KUNP television to conduct a multimedia campaign in Spanish that focused on connecting viewers with tips and resources to conserve water and prepare for emergencies



Working with regional partners on equity issues

- **Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO)** – Consortium staff served on the new equity committee which will create an equity lens and framework for all RDPO work. Staff also collaborated with regional and state stakeholders to support messaging projects that use plain language and simple graphics to inform community members about preparing for and responding to emergencies such as excessive heat, winter weather, and wildfire.
- **Regional Water Providers Consortium Members** – Coordinated trainings, resource sharing, and discussions focused on equity and accessibility

Embedding equity into our day-to-day work

- **Drinking Water Advisory Tool** – Identified accessibility gaps in current widget and prioritized language and screen reader access work for Fiscal Year 2022-2023
- **Accessible Communications Survey** – Gathered information from Consortium members on their current communication efforts and discussed ways that the Consortium could support water-focused accessible communications regionally
- **Contracting** – Selected an Oregon-based, minority-owned small business for the multilingual how-to video project contract of \$74,500
- **Curtail Your Enthusiasm Tabletop Exercise** – Led a virtual exercise for seventy-four participants from twenty-one water providers and five other agencies that focused on accessible and coordinated communications in response to a series of curtailment scenarios
- **Trainings** – Staff attended several webinars that focused on accessible communication best management practices and sought opportunities to incorporate new skills into practice
- **Equity commitment** – Drafted an equity commitment for Consortium members to review and contribute to in Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Public Outreach

Each year, the Consortium conducts several multimedia campaigns that focus on water conservation, emergency preparedness, source water protection, and other water-related topics of importance to water providers and the customers they serve. The Consortium works with its members and community partners to develop and deliver the campaigns. In addition, the Consortium develops a suite of messaging tools that help members speak with a regional voice, connect customers with information and resources, and amplify the messages shared by the Consortium in its multimedia campaigns.

Multimedia Campaigns

“Use water wisely. It’s just the right thing to do.”

The water conservation campaign ran from Drinking Water Week in May through mid-September on television (English and Spanish), radio, social media, and several other online platforms.

“Before there’s an emergency: Get ready. Get water.”

This personal preparedness campaign ran throughout September to mid-October on television (English and Spanish), TriMet buses, social media, and several other online platforms. Messaging focused on storing, treating, and accessing water in emergencies.

“Clean Water. It’s Our Future”

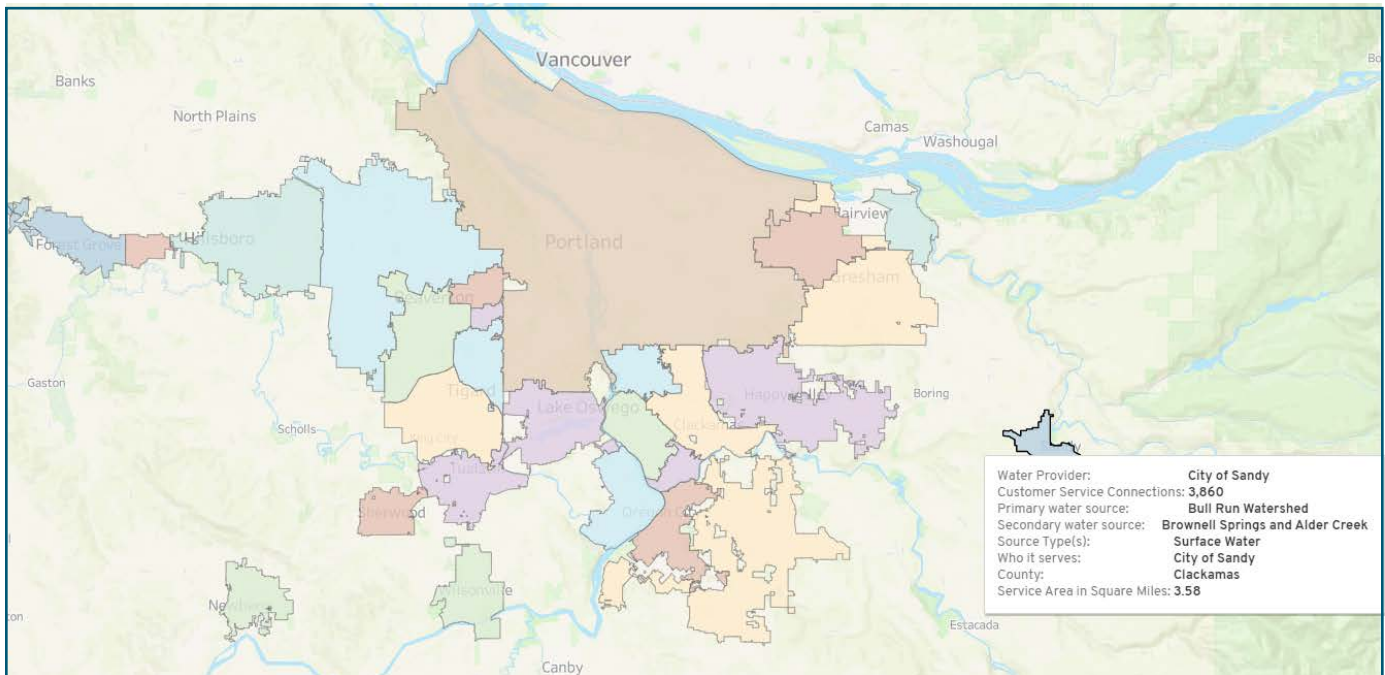
This year-long education campaign on television shares information about how everyday activities are the main source of pollution in local waterways and gives viewers water-safe alternatives.

A separate media campaign report is available upon request.

Diverse portfolio of messaging tools

The Consortium uses a variety of approaches and tools to support its public outreach goals and provide water customers with tips, information, and resources that are available online, in print, and through media campaigns. By working together, the Consortium achieved cost savings for its members and their customers.

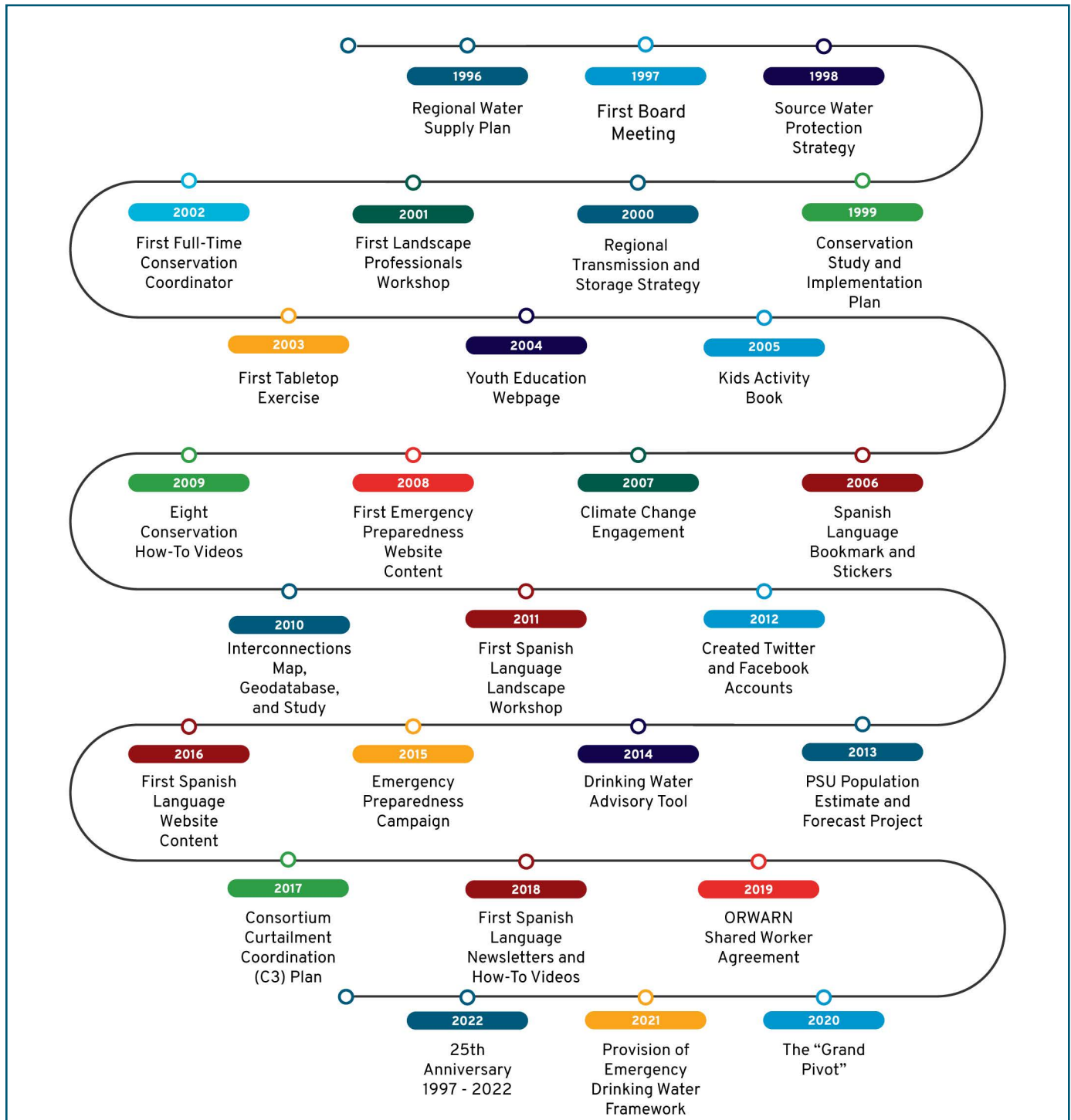
- **Social media** – Used ten messaging toolkits, three promotional giveaways, ongoing messaging, and digital advertising to reach consumers on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and LinkedIn
- **Newsletters** – Distributed thirteen newsletters in English and Spanish that highlighted information and resources to internal and external audiences
- **Weekly Watering Number** – Published and sent watering guidelines and water conservation tips to about 2,800 recipients from April - October
- **RegionalH2O.org** – Developed new content including an interactive map of water sources and providers, showcased resiliency work completed by water providers members, and incorporated seasonal content throughout the site



- **Print materials** – Coordinated an annual print order of more than forty print materials for twenty-five water providers and three counties
- **Promotional giveaways** – Distributed more than 1,800 water conservation and preparedness kits
- **Messaging toolkits** – Developed ten messaging toolkits for members and partners to use to amplify Consortium messaging through their own social media, websites, and newsletters
- **How-to videos** – Hosted seventeen videos on YouTube which have a total of 1,023,345 lifetime views
- **Youth education** – Provided educational opportunities to elementary students through four Mad Science assembly shows and a virtual Children's Clean Water Festival

Celebrating 25 Years

In 2022, we took some time to reflect on our accomplishments over our first twenty-five years. The graphic below provides a snapshot of some of the most notable work we've done together. It also showcases our ability to adapt to the changing needs of our members and their customers.



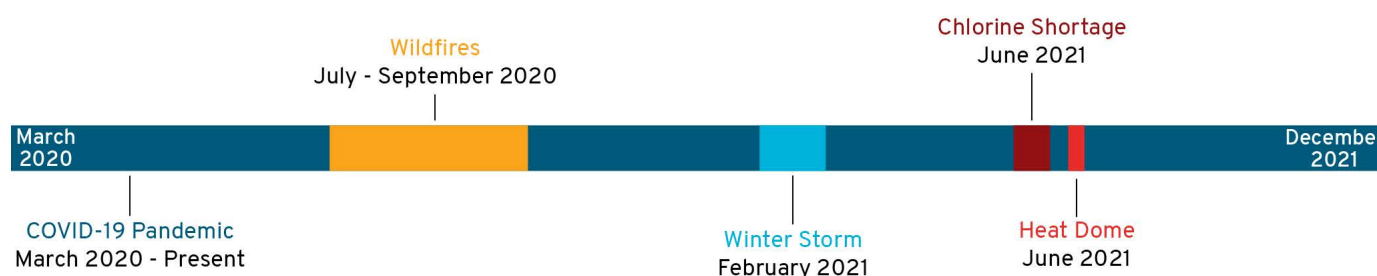
Building Resiliency

We are more resilient when we work together by sharing information and supporting one another. This year, the Consortium conducted three virtual tabletop exercises to gain insights into how we can work better together in times of normal operations and when responding to future emergencies and disasters. We also supported trainings, conferences, and completed significant work on emergency drinking water planning.

Using tabletop exercises to learn from the past, prepare for the future

This year, the Consortium conducted three tabletop exercises for its twenty-five water provider members and for regional and state partners.

1. **2020 and Beyond After Action Hot Wash** – Forty participants from nineteen Consortium member entities reflected on response and lessons learned from the concurrent emergencies between March 2020 – December 2021.



2. **Curtail Your Enthusiasm** – See page 4 for details.
3. **Emergency Drinking Water Framework** – See page 8 for details.

After action reports for each tabletop exercise are available upon request.

Accessing and developing resources

- **Grant funding** – Secured more than \$380,000 of Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funds to support the work on the Emergency Drinking Water Framework, the development of more than twenty multilingual how-to videos, and the creation of print materials in multiple languages
- **Website and media coverage** – Highlighted regional resiliency work and projects on the Consortium's website and media interview segments that occurred during National Critical Infrastructure and Resilience Month and Drinking Water Week
- **Emergency contact and equipment lists** – Gathered information from Consortium members and other regional partners to complete annual updates
- **Shared worker agreement** – Promoted Oregon Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (ORWARN) Shared Worker Agreement at trainings, meetings, and conferences; tracked participating agencies on behalf of ORWARN

Goals:

- Enhance emergency drinking water distribution disaster planning, collaboration, and communication among water providers and emergency response agencies
- Document roles and responsibilities amongst federal, state, regional, and local partners
- Determine post-disaster emergency water supply needs and sources throughout the region
- Develop strategies to close any gaps between available water resources and demand following a disaster
- Provide tools and recommendations to help water providers assess their current system, identify capability gaps, develop solutions, and incorporate needed improvements into long-term planning
- Ensure water is provided to vulnerable/underserved communities during and after a disaster
- Develop policies to address regional emergency management and water distribution priorities

Funding:

- \$250,000 UASI grant awarded to the Consortium to develop the Framework in partnership with the RDPO
- \$10,000 Consortium budget contribution plus staff time

Project Spotlight: Emergency Drinking Water Framework

Background

Who is responsible for providing emergency drinking water to the public following a major disaster? How much water do we need, and how will it get to those who need it most?

The Emergency Drinking Water Framework (Framework) begins to answer these questions by identifying current resources and planning ahead for the effective and equitable delivery of drinking water to households in the region. The project spans the five-county Portland metropolitan region of Clackamas, Clark, Columbia, Multnomah, and Washington Counties.

Milestones

- **January 2021** – Project begins: consultant hired, Project Task Force selected, and primary stakeholders identified
- **June 2021** – Conducted first workshop which brought together thirty-seven water providers, emergency managers, and state and federal partners to discuss roles and responsibilities
- **October 2021** – Conducted second workshop which included forty-three water providers and focused on gaps in available water supply and regional emergency water needs; introduced concept of “planning islands” or areas that would be isolated by extensive damage or natural barriers in a large-scale disaster
- **March 2022** – Led a tabletop exercise with fifty-nine stakeholders; tested key recommendations of the Framework, including the outlining of responsibilities, identification of gaps in communications, and emergency water distribution
- **June 2022** – Draft Framework shared with Project Task Force
- **September 2022** – Shared Framework and conducted a workshop with all stakeholders (this occurred in Fiscal Year 2022-2023 and will be reported in next year’s annual report)

Next Steps

With the completion of the Framework in fall 2022, water providers and emergency managers now have a more complete understanding of what needs to be done and how stakeholders can work together to accomplish those goals. Find out more information about this project at rdpo.net/emergencydrinkingwaterproject.

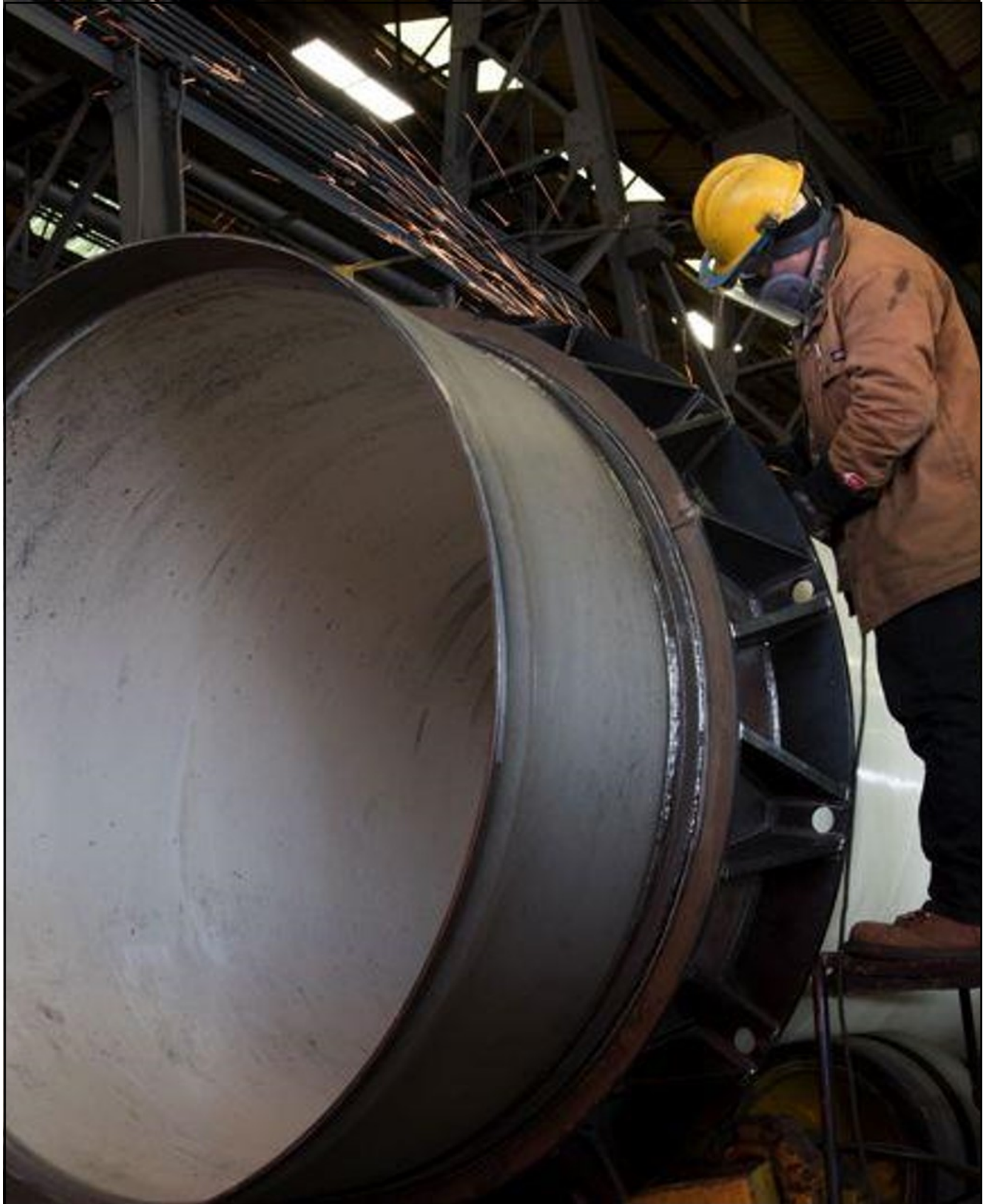


Photo courtesy of the Willamette Water Supply Program

Adopted Budget and Expense

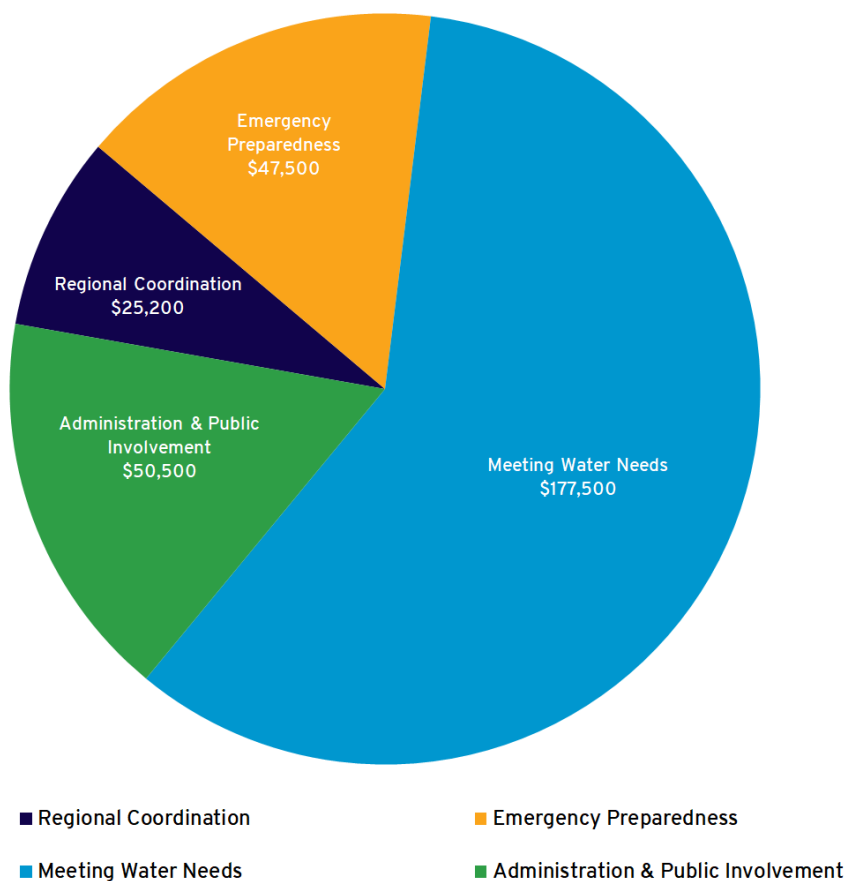
Fiscal Year 2021 - 2022 Work Plan and Budget

The Consortium's budget is supported through membership dues which are based on the number of connections and quantity of water each member organization serves. Each voting member has an equal voice in the Consortium's work regardless of the amount of its contribution to the Consortium's budget.

This year, the Consortium's budget was \$1,060,459 and 89% of it was expended. Unspent contingency, reduced travel, and continued savings due to the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the under-expenditure.

Consortium members were provided with bi-monthly expense reports throughout the year and can find the Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Consortium Work Plan and Budget and final expense report on the Consortium's website at regionalH2O.org/member-page.

Consortium Budget Allocation by Program Area

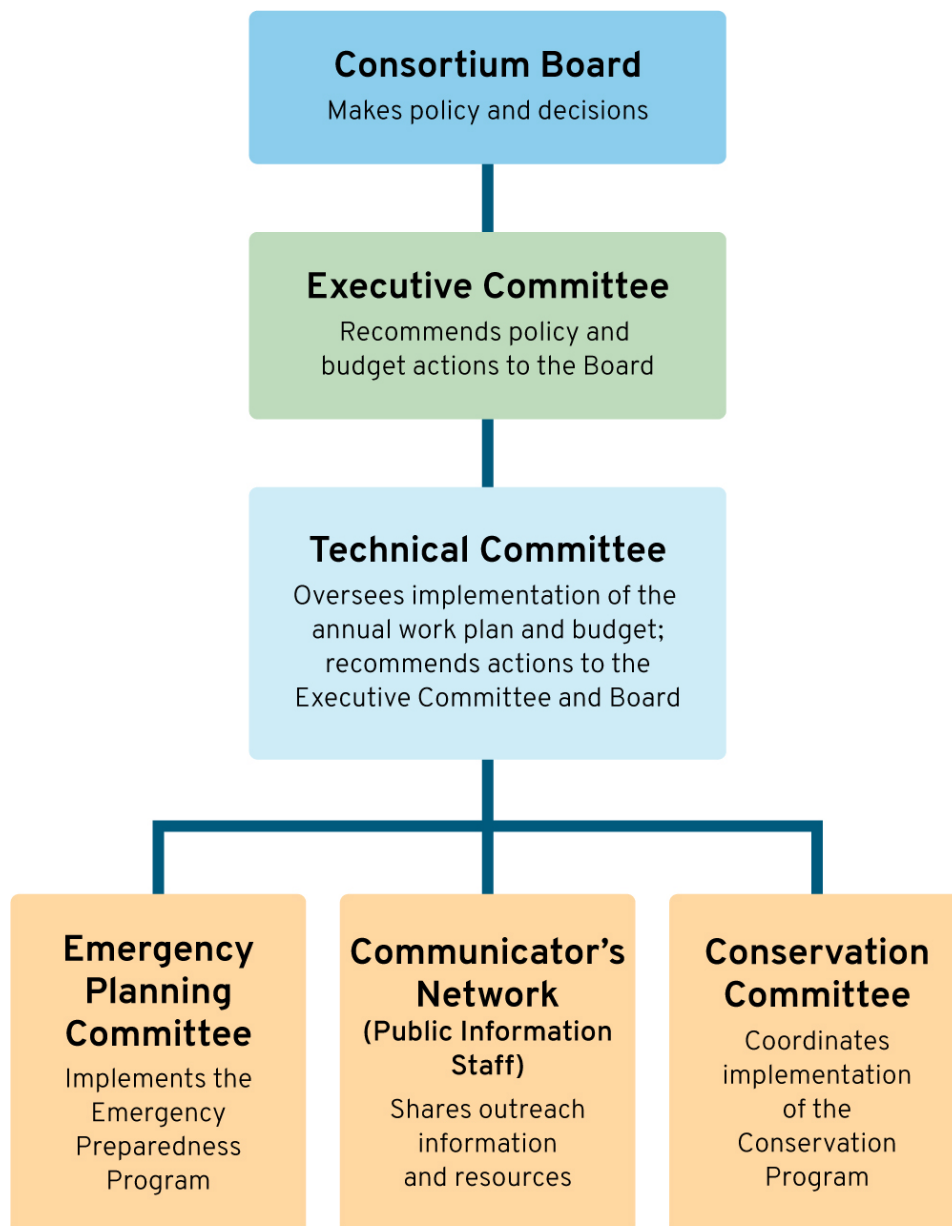


The Consortium budget also includes \$743,759 for personnel / overhead and \$10,000 for contingency.

How We Work

The Consortium is governed by its Board and works with its committees to complete the annual work plan. Consortium staff provide program management and support in addition to administrative, technical, and financial services through an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the City of Portland.

Organizational Structure of the Consortium Board and Committees





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