



Consortium Board Meeting Agenda

DATE: February 4, 2025
6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

LOCATION: This meeting will be held remotely via Zoom

Agenda

Introductions (5 minutes)

New Managing Director Introduction – Sarah Santner, Portland Water Bureau’s Resource Protection and Planning Director (5 minutes)

Approval of Consortium Board Meeting Summary for October 8, 2025 (5 minutes)

Public Comment* (5 minutes)

Managing Director’s Report – Bonny Cushman, Managing Director (15 minutes)

- Update on recent projects, activities, and committee work
- Letters of support for NIST Plumbing Research Program and EPA WaterSense Program

FY 2026-27 Consortium Budget and Work Plan – Bonny Cushman, Managing Director (15 minutes)

- Approval of FY 2026-27 Consortium Budget and Work Plan

Resiliency and Our Changing Water Supply (50 minutes)

- Introduction
- Willamette Water Supply Project: Mike Britch, Tualatin Valley Water District
- Cascade Water Alliance: Mike Whiteley, City of Gresham
- Portland’s Bull Run Filtration Project: Ken Ackerman, City of Portland

Next Meeting Date/Location:
June 3, 2026/via Zoom/videoconference



Consortium Board Meeting Summary

OCTOBER 8, 2025 CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM ADJOURNED: 7:55 PM

QUORUM PRESENT – YES – 14 MEMBERS

(MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM/VIDEOCONFERENCE)

Approval of June 5, 2025 Meeting Summary

Commissioner Naomi Angier made a motion to approve the June 5, 2025 Consortium Board meeting summary as presented. Councilor Bridget Brooks seconded the motion. The Consortium Board approved the June 5, 2025 Consortium Board meeting summary as presented (14:0:0).

Public Comment

None

Director Report

Rebecca Geisen, Consortium Managing Director advised that this will be her last Board meeting as Managing Director as she officially retired as of October 1. Ms. Geisen will continue to work as a retiree part-time to assist with the transition of the new Managing Director and to finish up the Emergency Drinking Water Framework Tabletop Exercises. Ms. Geisen shared the following updates:

- Tri-Annual Activity Report: A detailed tri-annual activity report was included in the meeting materials packet. Board members were encouraged to look over the report for information on activities conducted since the last Board meeting in June.
- Staffing Update: The Consortium Managing Director position recruitment was posted in early September and was open for approximately two weeks. The recruitment link was shared with all Consortium committees. First interviews have been scheduled. Consortium Technical Committee (CTC) members were part of the application review and are on the interview panels. Hope to have someone on board by November/December. Ms. Geisen will still be in her role as Managing Director until the new Director is hired.
- Emergency Drinking Water Framework Tabletop Exercises: The second of five county-specific exercises, the Columbia County workshop, was held on July 29. Participants included nine water providers, county staff, and state agencies. The Multnomah County

exercise is planned for October 16 and Washington County held internal, preliminary meetings to kick off the planning process. The project will conclude in April 2026.

Ms. Geisen shared a retrospective of her time with the Consortium. Ms. Geisen has been with the Consortium for the past 26 years and shared reflections and hopes for the future of the organization. Ms. Geisen reflected on the Consortium's development and growth of a regional emergency preparedness and resiliency program; the expansion of the Consortium's outreach program beyond conservation to include the value of water, emergency preparedness, and multilingual messaging; and the uniqueness of the Consortium's regional collaboration efforts. Ms. Geisen commented that there are not many organizations like the Consortium that come together in such a meaningful way that they work together for the benefit of the region and the people they serve. She noted that the Consortium has become a trusted source for drinking water information and that she is proud of the work the Consortium did during the pandemic – how we pivoted with messaging and getting it out; advanced the resilience of our drinking water systems and community education about emergency drinking water; and how the Consortium has made connections and built a drinking water community.

Ms. Geisen concluded that now is a great time to bring in a new generation of leaders with new ideas and priorities in addition to its core work that will make the Consortium stronger, and even more important and relevant.

Program Report

Bonny Cushman, Consortium Program Manager shared the following updates:

2025 Consortium Multimedia Campaign:

Summer Media Campaign – The Consortium summer media campaign ran July 7 through September 30. The Consortium partnered with Affiliated Media for a second year to help conduct much of its summer to fall multimedia campaign. This partnership resulted in a strong campaign that included a diverse media mix of broadcast television, cable television, broadcast radio, digitally placed audio and video ads, social media ads, and digital display ads. Ms. Cushman noted that an important aspect of the Consortium's work with media campaigns is leveraging partnerships to do production that can be used throughout the campaign at no or small cost to members. This year, the Consortium leveraged 26 in-kind television ads and 14 Spanish and Russian ads for a very small budget.

Print Media – This year's campaign also included working with a public relations consultant which resulted in earned media story placement in three Washington County Pamplin Media Publications and one in the Portland publication, SE Examiner.

Program Updates:

- RegionalH2O.org website – Updated pages with a lot of technical information; planning a sitewide review of Spanish language content to make sure Spanish speakers have the same access to drinking water information as English speakers; working to ensure all content is accessible for users with disabilities in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and ADA Title II, and creating a new URL for Spanish language outreach—aguaregional.org which automatically redirects visitors to Spanish resources on regionalH2O.org.
- Tabling events – The Consortium continued its focus on tabling at regional events that serve multicultural, multilingual attendees in 2025. Staff from City of Hillsboro tabled at the Latino Cultural Festival in June and at Fiesta Latina en el Parque in September. At both events, staff shared water conservation and emergency preparedness information and handed out English and Spanish print materials, shower timers, hose nozzles, and emergency water bags to event attendees.
- Youth Education Programming – Consortium Staff shared Youth Education programming recommendations for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 with the Consortium Conservation Committee (CCC), Water Communicators Network (WCN), and the Consortium Technical Committee (CTC) at their meetings this past fall. The recommendations were in response to higher than expected costs for school programming and included: 1. Foregoing in-school programming options altogether; 2. Completing the update of the “What Do You Know About H2O?” activity booklet project and providing members with a start-up supply of the new books as part of the 2026 annual print order; 3. Providing technical support to recruiting and onboarding a new Children’s Clean Water Festival event planner contractor. The CCC, WCN, and CTC all supported these recommendations with no changes.

Children’s Clean Water Festival:

Ms. Cushman gave an overview of the Children’s Clean Water Festival (CCWF). The Festival is a half day of learning and fun for 4th and 5th grade students that includes hands-on, water-focused activities, classroom presentations, and stage shows that reinforce STEM, Common Core, and Next Generation Science concepts. The festival costs about \$30,000 annually to put on. Approximately 10 Consortium members contribute money to help fund the CCWF. The Consortium typically pays about \$1,000 -\$3,000 per year in sponsorship funds and also contributes staff time.

The CCWF has always been committee-supported. Many committee members have specific roles – volunteers, presenters/exhibitors, fiscal, lunches, stage shows, web, buses & signage. In addition to participating in the planning committee, many sponsoring agencies also choose to provide funding, additional staff time the day of the event, and some pay for busses to take the kids to the Festival.

The CCWF also has a contractor event planner who helps coordinate the event (event planning, teacher communications, engage the planning committee, facility rental). That role has been the same for 20+ years. The current contractor has retired so the Consortium is working with staff from Rockwood Water PUD, Clackamas River Water Providers, Tualatin Valley Water District, and City of Hillsboro to recruit and onboard a new contractor. Rockwood PUD is the Festival fiscal agent and will manage the new event planner contract.

The current CCWF only serves 1000 students – about 30-35 classes. Pre pandemic, the event was able to do a full day event for about 1400 kid/52 classes. The size limiting is due to bus availability – there is a shortage and buses have to be there for their regular for morning and afternoon runs. Classes are chosen in December by the planning committee with a goal of having some from everywhere across the region. There are always more classes that apply than there are spots so they try to rotate so that the same schools aren't always chosen.

Board members were unable to participate in a planned activity from the Children's Clean Water Festival due to time constraints.

[**FY 2026-27 Budget and Workplan Concepts Discussion**](#)

Ms. Geisen noted that it is time to start exploring Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget and workplan concepts. FY 2026-27 will be the first full year under a new staffing model, including a new Consortium Managing Director.

Staffing

Consortium staff is currently comprised of two part-time staff: Managing Director (.3 -.5 FTE) and Management Assistant (.9 FTE), and two full-time staff: Outreach Program Manager and Program Specialist. Starting FY 26-27, the Consortium will transition to a 3 FTE model with the potential for a temporary, part-time staff position to be added as needed. This new model will provide the Consortium with consistent staffing that is solely focused on the work of the Consortium. It will also allow staff to operate as a more cohesive unit within the evolving City of Portland/Portland Water Bureau structure. Actual staffing costs will be available in December. It is important to note that staffing costs may shift but should not increase overall. Here's why:

- New Managing Director position is a different job classification with a lower pay range charged as a FTE vs hourly.
- Management Assistant position will be filled spring 2026 before Patty Burk fully retires on June 30, 2026. Job duties and classification will be determined after the new Consortium Manager is hired. The new hire will likely have lower starting salary.
- Work assignments may change for existing staff and result in positions being reclassified.
- Remaining staffing budget could be used to hire a part-time position for special projects or administrative work

FY 2026-27 Proposed Program & Projects:

The projects shared below serve as a menu of options brainstormed by staff for discussion and consideration. The Consortium Technical Committee and Executive Committee helped staff prioritize projects for Board consideration. Ms. Geisen noted that not all of the below proposed projects can be completed next fiscal year so staff is looking to the Board to help prioritize the work and give staff guidance on where to focus their time and resources. She advised that projects that are not on the FY 2026-27 work plan can be added to future work plans.

Meeting Water Needs:

Youth Education

- Develop marketing materials and member messaging toolkit for updated “What Do You Know About H2O?” kids’ activity book and other collateral materials.
- Develop activity kit for teachers to use in their classrooms

Workforce Development

- Assemble working committee to develop recommendations. Potential options include: More collaboration with Baywork, Special Districts Association of Oregon, Oregon Association of Water Utilities, Joint Water Commission’s Hired to Operate, etc.
- Website content updates/additions
- Develop career fair materials and provide coordination to streamline participation and materials
- Panel discussion (see below)

Emergency Preparedness & Resilience:

- Equipment Drill (As part of its strategic plan, the Consortium is committed to conducting a large-scale water treatment and distribution equipment drill every 3-5 years. The last drill was held in fall 2023).
- Interconnections TTX Follow-up Projects - Plan follow-up event from recent Interconnections TTX (e.g. field-testing day.)
- Reconvene GIS work group with the goal of updating the Interconnections Geodatabase.
- Seed Money for Group Emergency Water Bag Order (\$10,000+/-)

Strengthening Regional Partnerships:

- Plan one to two Consortium-sponsored workshops or panel discussions. Possible topics could include:
 - Affordability
 - Micro-hydro
 - BMPs on engaging community partners to deliver Consortium materials and programming
 - Member panel on new supply sources coming online in the next couple years and customer outreach
 - Workforce Development

FY 2026-27 Carryover

Next year's carryover amount exceeds the historical range of about \$115,000-\$120,000 that the Consortium has experienced over the last five years. For FY 2026-27 there will be a carryover of \$182,884. Having a significantly larger carryover presents the Consortium with a unique opportunity. At its September meeting, the CTC recommended that the Consortium use carryover funds for two purposes:

1. Use the majority to defray member dues
2. Spend some funds on a one-time project (e.g. emergency drinking water bags).

Historically, all carry-over funds have been used to defray member dues. Using carry-over funds for a one-time project will keep the overall amount of member dues stable from year-to-year. This will make it easier for members to budget for their annual Consortium membership dues. Staff are bringing this recommendation forward to the Board for consideration. If supported, the Board would vote in February 2026 as part of its adoption of the budget. If supported by the Board, the CTC and staff will work together to solidify the one-time project this fall. Lastly, with the shift to three full time employees, the carry-over from staffing will be greatly reduced moving forward.

Board members discussed the FY 2026-27 budget and work plan concepts presented and supported the proposed projects. There was broad support for work force development. There was interest expressed in exploring some discussion or study on group procurement. With increased costs due to tariffs, it was noted that now might be a good time to research how to leverage the benefits of the Consortium's purchasing power/economies of scale. Ms. Geisen advised that she would take the recommendation back to the Consortium Technical Committee for their thoughts/suggestions on how to move forward with that idea. The Board supported staff to bring a proposal to use some of the carryover funds to purchase emergency bags.

Ms. Geisen advised that Consortium staff will continue to work with the CTC and EC to refine the FY 2026-27 Consortium budget and work plan and bring it to the Board for their approval at their meeting in February.

Meeting Attendees:

25 Total Members

Quorum = 13

Councilor Kevin Teater – City of Beaverton	Commissioner Naomi Angier and Tom Heidgerken – Clackamas River Water	Councilor Cathy Keathley and Mike Whiteley – City of Gresham
Councilor Jim Yent and Jessica Dorsey – City of Hillsboro	Councilor Robert Massey – City of Milwaukie	Heidi Bullock – Oak Lodge Water Services
Councilor Mitch Green and Sarah Murphy Santner – City of Portland	Janine Casey – Rivergrove Water District	Kari Duncan – Rockwood Water PUD
Councilor Kristina Ramseyer and Ryan Wood – City of Sandy	Chair Renee Brouse and Rich Sattler – City of Sherwood	Commissioner Gary Barth – Sunrise Water Authority
Councilor Bridget Brooks – City of Tualatin	Commissioner Jim Duggan – Tualatin Valley Water District	Commissioner Paul Schuler – West Slope Water District
Councilor Adam Cunningham and Martin Montalvo – City of Wilsonville	Rebecca Geisen, Bonny Cushman, Patty Burk, and Riley Berger – Consortium Staff	

Consortium members agencies not represented by elected officials at this meeting included the City of Forest Grove, City of Gladstone, Lake Grove Water District, City of Lake Oswego, Raleigh Water District, Rockwood Water PUD, South Fork Water Board, City of Tigard, and City of Troutdale.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 4, 2026, via Zoom/videoconference

Triannual Activity Report

FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026

October 1, 2025 – January 31, 2026



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. The Consortium is comprised of 26 water provider members which represent 16 cities and 9 special districts that are located in Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. Its work falls into three program areas: Meeting Water Needs, Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency, and Regional Coordination. Consortium staff compile activity reports three times per year to share accomplishments with the Board.

Meeting Water Needs

Public Outreach

Information about public education and outreach programming promoting water conservation, source water protection, the value of water, and other water-related topics can be found on pages 2-4

Conservation-Focused Partnerships

Staff participated in several Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE) Education and Outreach committee meetings. They also continued attending meetings and tracking the work of California Water Efficiency Partnership's (CalWEP) Language and Accessibility Task Force. The group completed a comprehensive glossary of Spanish translations for water terminology in 2025 and is working on a Chinese database which is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

Youth Education Programming

Staff shared youth education programming recommendations for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 with member staff during the last reporting period. In lieu of in-school, assembly-style programming, staff implemented the projects approved by the Consortium Technical Committee (CTC) and supported by the Consortium Conservation Committee (CCC) and Water Communicators Network (WCN).

The work included providing support for recruiting and onboarding a new Children's Clean Water Festival event planner and continuing to update the "What Do You Know About H2O?" activity book. Staff engaged Consortium members in reviewing drafts of the activity book and conducted a teacher listening session in late January to gather educators' input on the book. The book is expected to be completed in spring 2026. Consortium members will receive a free startup supply of the book and can order additional copies as part of the Consortium's annual print order in spring 2026.

Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency

Public Outreach

Information about public education and outreach programming focusing on emergency preparedness and water provider resiliency can be found on pages 2-4

Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO)

RDPO Workgroups: Consortium staff continue to participate in and contribute to several RDPO workgroups including the Steering Committee, Program Committee, Public Information Workgroup, Public Works Workgroup, and Disaster Messaging Workgroup.

Future of the RDPO: Recent federal actions have the potential to significantly impact the RDPO's main funding source: the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program. As a result, the RDPO is working on implementing an organizational change charter during the first half of calendar year 2026. This may result in a very different RDPO should the UASI funding source go away.

Urban Area Security Initiative Grants: Consortium staff are working with the RDPO to add \$25,000 to its UASI FY 23 grant for the Provision of Emergency Drinking Water Framework project. The additional funding, if awarded, will be used to purchase one-gallon emergency water bags. Like past orders in 2017 and 2019, the bags will go to Consortium members to store with emergency water distribution trailers and to use as part of emergency preparedness-focused outreach.

Tabletop Exercises and Workshops

Emergency Drinking Water Framework Tabletop Exercises: Two of the five county-specific exercises occurred during the reporting period. The Multnomah County workshop was held on October 16, 2025 at The Portland Building in downtown Portland. The Washington County tabletop exercise was held on January 15, 2026 at the Washington Street Conference Center in Hillsboro.

Water providers and county agencies in Clackamas County began planning for the final exercise, scheduled for March 12, 2026. The project will conclude in April 2026. A final report that summarizes the project and recommendations for next steps in this work will be issued spring 2026. Rebecca Geisen is scheduled to present on this project at the June 2026 Consortium Board meeting.

Public Outreach Campaigns

Multimedia Campaigns

The Consortium runs several multimedia campaigns annually. This work includes conducting multimedia campaigns, developing messaging materials, and following accessible communications best practices. All current year multimedia campaign elements can be accessed on the Consortium [Newsroom](#) webpage.

“Clean Water. It’s Our Future.” Campaign: The Consortium continues to support the annual source water protection campaign on KPTV television.

[2025 Public Outreach Report](#): Consortium staff put together a comprehensive Public Outreach Report that includes information about the 2025 multimedia campaigns and outreach resources for members. The report also provides more granular information on the results of the multimedia, multilingual campaigns and public outreach projects completed on behalf of Consortium members. The report is available upon request and on the [regionalH2O.org Member Page](#).

Public Outreach Project Updates

[RegionalH2O.org Website](#): The website received 36,664 pageviews from 22,952 visitors from September 1 – December 31, 2025. The web contractor completed security updates, site maintenance, and provided staff with technical support. Staff completed seasonal updates, monthly analytics reports, weekly website maintenance, and continued search engine optimization (SEO) work and content updates.

Larger projects included:

- Digital Accessibility: Ensuring all content is accessible for users with disabilities in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and ADA Title II ahead of the April 2026 compliance date for the New Rule on Accessibility. This work includes screen reader accessibility, alt text for images, accessible color contrast, text-based alternatives for digital media, and keyboard-based navigability. During the reporting period, staff worked to make multilingual content, including the Drinking Water Advisory Tool, more accessible with translated alt text and language-specific code.
- Plain Language: Updating pages with a lot of technical information to use plain language so more community members can read, understand, and use the content. English content that uses plain language is also easier to translate and offer in other formats like diagrams. This is part of a larger, multi-year effort which has resulted in more than 60 updated web pages so far.
- Translated Content: Publishing updated indoor and outdoor water conservation tips in Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese. Staff also updated and expanded multilingual web content to include winter preparedness resources (Winterization), member contact information (Water Providers), and redesigned information architecture to support multilingual menus and navigation on regionalH2O.org.

[Consortium Social Media](#): The Consortium maintained a presence on its social media channels between September 1 – December 31, 2025. Because members reposted Consortium content, used social media copy from member toolkits, and engaged across platforms, regional resources reached more of your customers.

- Facebook – Followers remained just over 1,000 during the reporting period. Staff posted on the platform 77 times which resulted in 416,068 views and 2,141 page and post engagements.
- X (Twitter) – Followers remained at 637 during the reporting period. Staff published 77 tweets which resulted in 1,401 impressions and 17 engagements. Due to platform changes and low engagement, Consortium staff will begin to sunset X and focus engagement on other social media platforms.
- YouTube – Subscribers increased from 2.32K to 2.34K during the reporting period. The channel received 36.6K impressions resulting in 25.6K views for a total of 362.4 hours of watch time.
- LinkedIn – Followers increased from 103 to 113 with posts geared towards public meetings, reporting, careers in the water sector, and celebrating water-related milestones and resources. Follow the page at [www.linkedin.com/company/regionalH2O/](#) to help us reach more connections on this platform.

Newsletters: The January issue of *The Source* was sent to 128 member staff and included a feature of the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Annual Report, a welcome to the new Consortium Managing Director, Bonny Cushman, and information about youth education programming. It was opened by 39.1% of recipients and had an 8.0% click-to-open rate.

The next edition of *RegionalH2O News* will be sent ahead of Fix a Leak Week.

Member Toolkits: Staff created two toolkits from October – December 2025. They focused on Halloween-themed water conservation and multilingual emergency water shut-off resources. Toolkits include social media copy, multilingual website links, digital graphic assets, and newsletter articles for members to use in outreach to their customers. Each toolkit is available on the [Member Page](#) or [by request](#).

Regional Coordination

PSU Population and Household Estimates

The current intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with Portland State University (PSU) to provide population and household estimates and forecasts expires on June 30, 2026. The Consortium Technical Committee (CTC) agreed at their November meeting that the Consortium should continue the agreement with PSU to provide this data. Ethan Sharygin from PSU attended the November CTC meeting to talk about the project and gathered input from members on potential updates and changes to how project data is collected and presented. Consortium staff are continuing to work with PSU to update the scope of work.

Administration and Public Involvement

Staff completed the following Consortium program administrative activities during this reporting period: monitored the budget; completed the final expense report for the first half of FY 2025-2026; developed and managed contracts; collected membership dues information; processed invoices and completed other accounting tasks; provided committee meeting logistics.

Consortium Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee (EC) met in January to provide staff with guidance and feedback on the proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget Concepts and Workplan and reviewed the agenda for the February Board meeting.

The Consortium Technical Committee (CTC) met in November 2025 and January 2026. The CTC provided input and recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget concepts and workplan and the Population and Household Estimates and Forecast project at both meetings. At the January meeting the CTC also provided input on the February Board meeting agenda.

The Consortium Conservation Committee (CCC) and Water Communicators Network (WCN) held joint meetings in October and December 2025. The October meeting included a work planning and budget concepts discussion to gather member input on proposed projects. The December meeting was used as a work session to review and provide feedback on the “What Do You Know About H2O?” activity book. Both meetings included time for members to share information, updates, and resources with one another.

The Emergency Planning Committee (EPC) met in November and January. Both meetings included updates on emergency drinking water tabletop exercises (more information on page 2), an upcoming emergency water bag order, and ongoing changes to RDPO and UASI funding. Both meetings included time for members to share information, updates, and resources with one another.

Consortium Staffing

Bonny Cushman began her new role as Consortium Managing Director in December. Bonny brings a wealth of experience to this role, including her almost 20-year tenure with the Consortium supporting various projects, managing programs, and collaborating with member staff. Rebecca will continue to work in a part-time capacity to complete the Emergency Drinking Water Framework project and provide support during the staff transition.

Contracting

Website: The Consortium is working to extend its current contract with Resource Development, Inc. for two additional years. Staff are working with City of Portland Procurement to review and finalize a new technology services contract for website maintenance and security by the end of this fiscal year.

Youth Education: The Consortium selected Tinker LLC to coordinate teacher feedback sessions as part of the “What Do You Know About H2O?” activity book project. The goal of the sessions was to collect educator input on a draft version of the book and to provide actionable next steps for staff and members to use while completing the project. This is the second time the Consortium has conducted educator listening sessions in redeveloping its youth education programming and resources.



Beaverton, City of
Clackamas River Water
Cornelius, City of
Forest Grove, City of
Gladstone, City of
Gresham, City of
Hillsboro, City of
Lake Grove Water District
Lake Oswego, City of
Milwaukie, City of
Oak Lodge Water Services
Portland, City of
Raleigh Water District
Rivergrove Water District
Rockwood Water PUD
Sandy, City of
Scappoose, City of
Sherwood, City of
South Fork 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

Memorandum

February 4, 2026

To: Consortium Board
From: Bonny Cushman, Managing Director
Subject: Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Budget and Work Plan for Adoption

This memo summarizes the proposed Consortium budget and work plan for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 for Board discussion and approval at its February 2026 meeting. This proposed budget maintains the Consortium Technical Committee's (CTC) and Board's goal for a budget that has minimum impact on member dues and maintains core programming.

Proposed Consortium Budget FY 26-27	FY 24-25 Carry Over	Proposed Member Dues Budget FY 26-27
\$1,331,519 (1.6% increase)	\$182,884	\$1,148,635 (-2.2% decrease)

There are minimal changes to the draft budget and workplan concepts that you received at the October meeting. Those changes are outlined in this memo.

Staffing

Since we last met, staff received final staffing costs from the City of Portland and incorporated them into the proposed budget.

This will be the first full year under a new staffing model. The new model includes a new Managing Director, two full-time staff, and one temporary, part-time staff position.

Going forward, it is important to note that staffing costs will continue to shift in the coming months but should not increase overall. Here's why:

- New Managing Director position is a different job classification with a lower pay range charged as a full-time equivalent (FTE) vs hourly.
- The Consortium will hire a new staff position this spring to fill the Management Assistant position currently held by Patty Burk. This position's job duties and classification will be determined in the first quarter of the year, and the new hire will likely have a lower salary.
- Work assignments may change for existing staff and result in existing positions being reclassified to a higher pay range.
- The proposed budget includes \$31,250 to hire a part-time, temporary position. This position's job duties will also be determined in the first quarter of the year and is likely to focus on special projects, program support, or administrative work.

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Work Plan - Proposed Projects by Consortium Focus Area:

Below is a list of the proposed projects. Unless specified, projects listed are budget neutral and will require staff time to complete.

All projects except for workforce development (Meeting Water Needs) and Consortium-sponsored workshops or panel discussions (Strengthening Regional Partnerships) were almost identically ranked by CTC members previously, so projects are not listed in order of priority or preference.

Note: Because FY 2026-2027 is a transition year, it is possible that some of the projects listed below may take more than a single year to complete. Staff will continue to use your input to prioritize projects and determine what can be completed in FY 2026-2027. If a project is a priority and can't be completed in FY 2026-2027, it can be added to future workplans.

Meeting Water Needs

Proposed Projects	Additional Info
Youth Education <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop marketing materials and member messaging toolkit for updated "What Do You Know About H2O?" kids' activity book and other related materials.• Develop classroom activity kit for teachers	These projects will help advance our work in the absence of a school program. Teacher kits would require hiring a contractor to help develop the kits. This is a <i>lighter lift</i> project for staff.
Workforce Development Potential options <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Continued collaboration with Baywork, Special Districts Association of Oregon, Oregon Association of Water Utilities, Joint Water Commission's Hired to Operate, etc.◦ Website content updates/additions◦ Streamline regional participation in career fairs by developing materials and/or coordinating participation logistics◦ Panel discussion (see below)	The list of proposed topics are ideas which will need to be discussed by the CTC at a future meeting, and it may be necessary to assemble small work group to help develop and/or implement projects. Members also shared that it would be helpful to learn more about what one another and other regional partners are doing with workforce development efforts to compliment work that is already being done. Members identified this as a top priority to focus on. Likely will be a <i>light to medium lift</i> project for staff to implement depending on scope.

Emergency Preparedness and Resilience

Proposed Projects	Additional Info
Equipment Drill As part of its strategic plan, the Consortium is committed to conducting a large-scale water treatment and distribution equipment drill every 3-5 years. The last drill was held in fall 2023.	Every after-action report from previous drills and exercises has highlighted the importance of periodic drills to ensure new and existing staff are trained in how to use emergency water equipment. This project will likely conclude in fall 2027 which means that it will span two fiscal years. This will be a <i>heavier lift</i> for staff and require member participation in a planning committee to implement.
Interconnections Tabletop Exercise (TTX) Follow-up Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan follow-up event from recent Interconnections TTX (e.g. field-testing day.)• Reconvene GIS work group with the goal of updating the Interconnections Geodatabase.	Update of the geodatabase was identified as a priority of members who attended the interconnections workshop. This project would require ongoing member participation. This work group would be new and in addition to other existing working committees. This is a <i>medium lift</i> for staff to implement.
Seed Money for Group Emergency	Staff removed this project from work plan.

Water Bag Order (+/- \$10,000)

Strengthening Regional Partnerships

Proposed Projects	Additional Info
PSU Population and Household Estimates – NEW! \$22,600* *Assumes that members are interested in pursuing all options of additional data and includes the cost of a one-time charge of \$6,000 to build a geographic crosswalk and \$1,500 to add the option for demographic data for all members. Also includes another one-time cost of \$3,600 for documenting data specifics of sources and the assumptions underlying population projections and forecasts provided through this scope of work.	Since we last met in November, staff worked with Portland State University (PSU) to collect cost estimates for the Population and Household Estimates project. These estimates included the potential to broaden the project scope to include additional data (demographic information, data by water provider pressure zone) as discussed at the November CTC meeting. This proposed budget includes an increased <u>placeholder cost</u> * for this project. If this is not the case, the result will be that this project will be underspent for FY 2026-2027. This is a <i>light lift</i> project for staff.
Plan one to two Consortium-sponsored workshops or panel discussions Possible topics could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Workforce Development◦ Affordability◦ Micro-hydro◦ BMPs on engaging community partners to deliver Consortium materials and programming◦ Member panel on new supply sources coming online and customer outreach Other?	The list of topics proposed are ideas which will need to be discussed by the CTC at a future meeting and it may be necessary to assemble a small work group to plan and organize each event. Members are also likely to be asked to present at these events. Members identified this as a top priority to focus on. It is likely a <i>medium lift</i> for staff to implement.

A note about the future of carryover funds

As mentioned in a previous memo, next year's carryover amount of \$182,884 far exceeds the historical range (\$115,000-\$120,000) that we've experienced over the last five years. Historically, the Consortium's carryover came from under expended personnel dollars from the two Consortium staff whose time was allocated between the Consortium and the Portland Water Bureau. Because our new staffing model includes three staff who will be fully funded by the Consortium, it is important to note that future carryovers are likely to be greatly reduced. When this comes to be, likely in FY 2028-29, this will lead to higher member dues. The point in bringing this up now is to communicate the future budget impact to members as the potential for them emerges.

For FY 2026-2027, staff is recommending that we continue to use all carryover funds to defray member dues.

Increased contingency funding added

Staff are also proposing that the Consortium increase its contingency line item from \$10,000 to \$50,000 in the FY 2026-27 and potentially for future years. This action will result in the Consortium's contingency representing 4.35% of its operating budget. The CTC and Executive Committee supported taking this action at their meetings in January.

Taking this action now will help to stabilize fluctuation of member dues in the short-term and ensure that the Consortium has ample contingency funding to respond to emerging issues in the longer term.

A note about Member dues

While this year's total member dues budget reflects an overall decrease of 2.2%, it is important to note that individual member's dues are determined by customer account and average daily water demand data that members provide to Consortium staff annually. As a result, member dues can fluctuate and may not reflect the dues budget reduction.

DRAFT REGIONAL WATER PROVIDERS CONSORTIUM BUDGET & WORK PLAN—FISCAL YEAR 2026/27 - PROPOSED

FY 26/27

Administration and Public Involvement		Staff and Material and Services	FTE	Hours	Cost
Administration: Includes staff time to develop the work program and budget; execute and manage contracts and intergovernmental agreements; provide fiscal management and reporting; personnel and business logistics management; and support the Consortium Board, Executive Committee, and Technical Committee.		Coordinator I		1700	\$184,824
		Analyst I		0	\$0
Public involvement: includes responding to public information requests, adhering to public meeting law requirements, graphic design and web contract work, and other online services that support web and social media work. Specific line items in the budget include:		Part-time Community Service Aid		1000	\$31,250
Materials and Services: Supports operation of the Consortium and includes meeting logistics (virtual and live), postage and reproduction services, publications.		Managing Director		600	\$90,090
Graphic Designer: Use professional services to provide design support for public outreach and other program materials.		Materials & Services			\$16,000
Website: Use professional services to provide web contractor support for the Consortium's regionalH2O.org and the Children's Clean Water Festival websites; support web site hosting and other related costs for Consortium websites, social media, and newsletters.		Graphic Designer			\$10,000
		Website			\$23,000
		Total Materials and Services			\$49,000
		Total Staff Time		1.40	\$306,164
		Total for Administration and PI			\$355,164
Emergency Preparedness and Resilience		Staff and Material and Services	FTE	Hours	Cost
Strategic initiatives: Educating the public about emergency preparedness and the importance of water; facilitating planning, projects, and training opportunities that help members plan for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and extreme events; obtaining and developing resources that will help members and the region support preparedness goals and requirements; supporting each other through data and resource sharing and mutual aid; and, collaborating with regional stakeholders.		Managing Director		600	\$90,090
Includes staff time to develop, facilitate, and implement programs and oversee the emergency preparedness committee; develop and update resources with a focus on regional interconnections; projects focused on making the water sector more resilient; support for grant applications; and, foster regional collaboration and partnerships. Specific line items in the budget include:		Analyst I		300	\$38,838
Emergency Drinking Water Framework: Continue to manage Phase II of project by overseeing contract for regional table top exercises focused on emergency water distribution (to the five UASI counties). Provide one-time funding start up supplies to support an emergency bag order (bags can be stored with member's emergency treatment and distribution equipment or used to as part of public outreach efforts that promote storing a supply of emergency drinking water).		Materials & Services			\$4,000
Exercise and Training: Sponsor and/or partner to bring more water sector specific training opportunities to Consortium members. Conduct one table top exercise or drill.		Exercise and Training			\$3,000
		Total Materials and Services			\$7,000
		Total Staff Time		0.50	\$128,928
		Total for Emergency Preparedness			\$135,928
Strengthening Regional Partnerships		Staff and Material and Services	FTE	Hours	Cost
Strategic Initiatives: Expanding awareness of the Consortium's value, mission, programs, and the benefits of membership to water providers; facilitating a network of peers that members can rely on for information, expertise, resources, and sub-regional partnerships; building strong and strategic relationships that reflect our community and prioritize equity when sharing information about drinking water and Consortium resources; maintaining Board and staff continuity and effectiveness through succession planning, effective onboarding, and member engagement; addressing issues of importance through legislative advocacy; and, being a trusted source for drinking water related information.		GIS Tech Support		80	\$9,895
Includes staff time to collaborate with community, regional, state, and national partners by highlighting the importance of drinking water and participating in issues that affect water providers; providing resources, peer-to-peer connections, and learning opportunities to the Consortium Board and member entities on emerging issues and other topics that members prioritize; and, advocating for source water protection and the value of drinking water. Specific line items in the budget include:		Managing Director		200	\$30,030
Drinking Water Advisory (DWA) Look-Up Tool: Work with Portland's Bureau of Technology Services (BTS) to maintain the web-based application on www.PublicAlerts.org .		Analyst I		200	\$25,892
Population and Household Estimates: Contract Portland State University's Population Research Center to update the population and household estimates and forecasts for Consortium members.		Drinking Water Advisory Tool			\$5,000
		PSU Population Forecast Project			\$22,600
		Total Materials and Services			\$27,600
		Total Regional Collaboration			\$93,417
Meeting Water Needs		Programs		Cost	
Strategic Initiatives: Making best use of available water resources, partnerships, plans and studies to meet regional water needs and respond to changes in population and water demand; providing programming, public education, and outreach materials on priority topics that are accessible to diverse audiences and stakeholders; and, providing accessible programs and resources that help water providers meet water conservation requirements.		English Media Campaigns, Digital Campaign, Public Outreach and Public Relations			\$176,000
		Multilingual Media Campaigns & Public Outreach			\$56,000

<p>Includes staff time to develop, facilitate, and implement programs and oversee the conservation and water communicator committees; conduct public outreach programming that promotes outdoor and indoor water conservation, emergency preparedness, source water protection, climate change adaptation, and the value of water; and, foster regional collaboration and partnerships. Specific line items in the budget include:</p> <p>Multimedia Campaigns and Public Outreach: Help Consortium members effectively serve their customers by working with media, contractors, and community partners to develop and conduct multimedia and multilingual public outreach campaigns that promote information, tips, and resources that focus on water conservation, emergency preparedness, source water protection, and value of water. Languages: English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, and others as needed.</p> <p>Youth Education Programming: Continue to help sponsor the annual Children's Clean Water Festival that engages approximately 1,000 fourth graders in a half day event that includes hands-on, water-focused activities, classroom presentations, and stage shows. Develop marketing materials and member messaging toolkit for the updated "What Do You Know About H2O?" kids' activity book and other youth ed collateral materials. Develop an activity kit for teachers to use in their classrooms.</p> <p>Weekly Watering Number (WWN): Provide weather-based watering recommendations and conservation tips to Consortium member customers via text or email each week from mid-April through mid-October.</p> <p>Professional Membership Fees: e.g. Alliance for Water Efficiency and American Water Works Association.</p> <p>Public Outreach Materials: Conduct annual print order of Consortium print materials (available to members and select partners); production materials for events and promotions; purchase of conservation devices or other materials for promotions; and as possible, providing a start-up supply for members of any new materials.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Youth Education Programming</td><td></td><td>\$18,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Weekly Watering Number</td><td></td><td>\$5,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Professional Memberships</td><td></td><td>\$2,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Public outreach materials</td><td></td><td>\$13,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total Materials and Services</td><td></td><td>\$270,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Staff and Material and Services</td><td>FTE</td><td>Hours</td><td>Cost</td></tr> <tr> <td>Managing Director</td><td></td><td>300</td><td>\$45,045</td></tr> <tr> <td>Analyst I</td><td></td><td>1200</td><td>\$155,352</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td></td><td></td><td>\$200,397</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total Staff Time</td><td>0.90</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Total Materials and Services</td><td></td><td>\$270,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total Conservation</td><td></td><td>\$470,397</td></tr> </table>	Youth Education Programming		\$18,000	Weekly Watering Number		\$5,000	Professional Memberships		\$2,000	Public outreach materials		\$13,000	Total Materials and Services		\$270,000	Staff and Material and Services	FTE	Hours	Cost	Managing Director		300	\$45,045	Analyst I		1200	\$155,352				\$200,397	Total Staff Time	0.90			Total Materials and Services		\$270,000	Total Conservation		\$470,397
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Personnel Summary																																										
Materials and Services Summary																																										
Contingency Funding (may be reallocated to approved budget items with approval from CTC)																																										
Overhead for Fund Administration under City of Portland and RWPC Staffing IGA @ 31.6%																																										
Total City of Portland Staffing Costs with Overhead			\$922,919																																							
TOTAL CONSORTIUM BUDGET FOR EXPENDITURE PURPOSES			\$1,331,519																																							
Minus Carryover for FY 24/25			-\$182,884																																							
TOTAL CONSORTIUM BUDGET FOR DUES PURPOSES			\$1,148,635																																							
Notes:																																										
1) For purposes of consistency with the Regional Water Providers Consortium authorizing Intergovernmental Agreement, the official work plan and budget is comprised of key activities, materials and services, and associated staff resources and costs, as indicated in bold type on the table above. Activities, materials and services, along with associated staff resources and costs listed on any attached page(s) shall be construed as guidance only, to be managed by Consortium staff as directed by the Consortium Technical Committee and the Executive Committee of the Board.																																										
2) The Board may amend the official work plan and budget elements within the bolded amounts described in Note 1 above, so long as such amendment does not increase dues-based funding requirements. The Board may expand the work plan and budget so long as proposed expansions are associated with other identified non-dues-based funds (e.g., voluntary contributions, grants).																																										
3) Activities, and materials and services may be contracted out by the Consortium through the Consortium staff as allowed under the Staffing Intergovernmental Agreement signed between the City of Portland and the Consortium Board. Administration of the work program shall be under the direction of the Consortium Technical Committee or as otherwise directed by the Board or delegated by the Board to the Executive Committee.																																										
4) The carryover amount for FY 24/25 is \$182,884																																										

**Regional Water Providers Consortium Dues Share
FY 2026 -2027 Budget - Proposed**

Participants	2025 Customer Accounts	% of Total	Dues Funding Share	2025 Average Wtr Dmd	% of Total	Dues Funding Share	Total Consortium Share
Beaverton	24,187	4.94%	\$28,294	9.49	5.78%	\$33,128	\$61,422
Clackamas RW	13,028	2.66%	\$15,240	5.47	3.33%	\$19,095	\$34,335
Cornelius	4,224	0.86%	\$4,941	1.03	0.63%	\$3,596	\$8,537
Forest Grove	7,277	1.49%	\$8,513	3.20	1.95%	\$11,171	\$19,683
Gladstone	3,582	0.73%	\$4,190	1.31	0.80%	\$4,573	\$8,763
Gresham	18,302	3.74%	\$21,410	6.16	3.75%	\$21,503	\$42,913
Hillsboro	28,288	5.78%	\$33,091	17.50	10.66%	\$61,089	\$94,180
Lake Grove	1,352	0.28%	\$1,582	0.31	0.19%	\$1,082	\$2,664
Lake Oswego	12,488	2.55%	\$14,608	4.83	2.94%	\$16,861	\$31,469
Milwaukie	6,868	1.40%	\$8,034	1.86	1.13%	\$6,493	\$14,527
Oak Lodge Water Services	8,952	1.83%	\$10,472	2.81	1.71%	\$9,809	\$20,281
Portland	190,104	38.81%	\$222,383	48.10	29.31%	\$167,908	\$390,289
Raleigh WD	1,023	0.21%	\$1,197	0.52	0.32%	\$1,815	\$3,012
Rivergrove Water District	1,388	0.28%	\$1,624	0.33	0.20%	\$1,152	\$2,776
Rockwood PUD	13,831	2.82%	\$16,179	7.02	4.28%	\$24,505	\$40,685
Sandy	4,245	0.87%	\$4,966	0.98	0.60%	\$3,421	\$8,387
Sherwood	6,246	1.28%	\$7,307	1.98	1.21%	\$6,912	\$14,218
South Fork WB	20,635	4.21%	\$24,139	6.21	3.78%	\$21,678	\$45,817
Sunrise Water Auth.	17,591	3.59%	\$20,578	6.18	3.77%	\$21,573	\$42,151
Tigard	21,253	4.34%	\$24,862	6.49	3.95%	\$22,655	\$47,517
Troutdale	4,864	0.99%	\$5,690	1.54	0.94%	\$5,376	\$11,066
Tualatin	7,270	1.48%	\$8,504	3.99	2.43%	\$13,928	\$22,433
Tualatin Valley WD	62,168	12.69%	\$72,724	22.23	13.54%	\$77,601	\$150,324
West Slope WD	3,259	0.67%	\$3,812	1.12	0.68%	\$3,910	\$7,722
Wilsonville	7,359	1.50%	\$8,609	3.47	2.11%	\$12,113	\$20,722
SUB TOTAL	489,784	100.00%	\$572,947	164.13	100.00%	\$572,947	\$1,145,893
Scappoose*	2,742						\$2,742
Grand Total							\$1,148,635

Data collected directly from the Participant entity

NOTE: The actual Consortium Budget is \$1,331,519 reduced by \$182,884 in carryover from FY 2024/25.

*Associate Member - dues share cost \$1 per customer account.

Regional Water Providers Consortium					
Annual Expense Report (FY 2024-2025) July 2025 - December 2025 50% through fiscal year					
	Budgeted	Expended	Balance	Percentage Budget Expended	
Personnel	706,868	308,702	398,166	44%	
Administration/Public Involvement	306,527	134,455	172,072	44%	
Emergency Preparedness	136,355	57,072	79,283	42%	
Strengthening Regional Partnerships	54,093	16,286	37,807	30%	
Meeting Water Needs	209,893	100,890	109,003	48%	
Overhead - 29.5%	208,526	91,067	117,459	44%	
Administration & Public Involvement	50,500	14,044	36,456	28%	
Materials & Services	16,500	5,810	10,690		
Graphic Design	10,000	1,401	8,599		
Website	24,000	6,833	17,167		
Emergency Preparedness	35,000	2,067	32,933	6%	
Exercises and Trainings	3,000	359	2,641		
Miscellaneous/Dues	4,000	0	4,000		
Emergency Drinking Water Framework - Phase 2 (carryover from FY 24/25) (Carryover \$28k to FY 25/26 by resolution adopted by Board at June 5, 2025 Meeting)	28,000	1,708	26,292		
Strengthening Regional Partnerships	15,575	1,872	13,703	12%	
Drinking Water Advisory Tool	5,000	1,872	3,128		
PSU Population Forecast Project	10,575		10,575		
Meeting Water Needs	319,275	44,162	275,113	14%	
English Media Campaigns, Digital Campaign, Public Outreach and Public Relations	176,300	24,588	151,713		
Multilingual Campaigns & Public Outreach	56,500	9,817	46,683		
Weekly Watering Number	6,000	3,533	2,468		
Youth Education Programming(Carryover \$12k to FY 25/26 by resolution adopted by Board at June 5, 2025 Meeting)	30,000	6,225	23,775		
Professional Memberships	1,200		1,200		
Public Outreach Materials	14,275		14,275		
Trust Your Tap Project	35,000		35,000		
Travel/Training	5,000	0	5,000	0%	
Contingency	10,000	0	10,000	0%	
Grand Total	1,350,744	461,914	888,830	34%	
Original budget total - \$1,310,743, Dues base budget total \$1,174,211 (carryover amount from FY 23-24 = \$136,532)	Grand Total includes \$40k carryover from FY 24-25, \$28k for Framework-Phase 2 and \$12k for YE (\$1,310,743 +\$40,000 = \$1,350,743)				

Regional Water Providers Consortium

Personnel Hours Report (FY 2024-2025) July 2024 -December 2025 - 50% through fiscal year

Program	Hours Budgeted	Hours Expended	Percentage Hours Expended
Administration/Public Involvement	2505	1070.5	43%
Emergency Preparedness	1075	447.0	42%
Strengthening Regional Partnerships	380	106.0	28%
Meeting Water Needs	1900	884.5	47%
Total Hours	5860	2508	43%

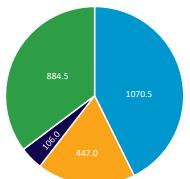
Regional Water Providers Consortium

July 2025 - December 2025 - 50% through fiscal year

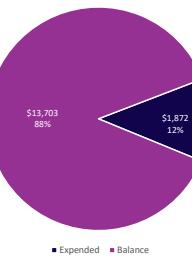
Personnel Expenses by Program Area



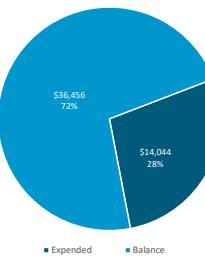
Personnel Hours Expended by Program Area



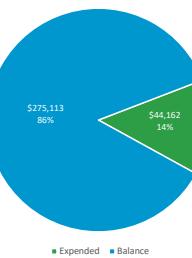
Strengthening Regional Partnerships Program Expenses



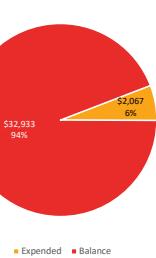
Administration & Public Involvement Program Expenses



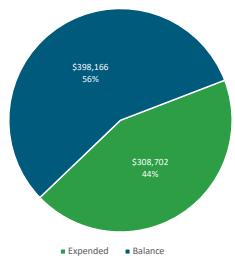
Meeting Water Needs Program Expenses



Emergency Preparedness Program Expenses



Personnel Costs



January XX, 2026

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support Robust Funding for EPA WaterSense Program

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies,

The undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for full funding in Fiscal Year 2027 for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense® program. WaterSense is a highly successful, voluntary public-private partnership that helps American consumers save water, energy, and money while encouraging innovation, consistency, and performance in the plumbing and irrigation marketplace.

Since its inception, WaterSense has helped Americans save an estimated 8.7 trillion gallons of water and more than \$207 billion in water and energy bills, delivering measurable benefits to households, businesses, and communities across the country. These savings are particularly important as families face rising utility costs and communities confront growing water supply challenges.

WaterSense makes it easy for consumers to choose water-efficient products and services by providing a trusted, nationally recognized label backed by independent third-party testing and certification. Consumers can choose from more than 42,000 WaterSense-labeled products, available at a wide range of price points, with little to no cost difference compared to non-labeled alternatives. Manufacturers have invested millions of dollars to design products that meet WaterSense efficiency and performance criteria, giving consumers confidence that labeled products deliver both water savings and high performance.

Importantly, WaterSense is not duplicated by any other public or private program. It has become the primary reference point for water efficiency across the country, helping to avoid a costly and fragmented patchwork of state and local efficiency requirements. While 18 states and dozens of cities have adopted plumbing efficiency regulations that exceed federal minimum standards, many have chosen to reference WaterSense specifications rather than develop unique requirements—promoting national consistency, market certainty, and compliance efficiency for manufacturers, retailers, and builders.

WaterSense also plays a critical role in supporting water utilities and local governments by helping them defer or avoid expensive water and wastewater infrastructure investments that are ultimately borne by ratepayers. For example, Seattle Public Utilities has reported that approximately \$75 million in conservation and efficiency investments helped avoid more than \$800 million in new water supply costs. These savings translate directly into more affordable water services for consumers and businesses.

By reducing per-capita water demand, WaterSense supports responsible real estate development, population growth, and economic expansion—particularly in water-stressed regions. In Arizona, for example, state law requires new developments to demonstrate a 100-year assured water supply. Cities such as Phoenix have been able to grow substantially while holding water use nearly flat, in part due to widespread adoption of water-efficient fixtures and appliances promoted through programs like WaterSense.

WaterSense products also provide important benefits for the roughly 20 percent of American households that rely on onsite wastewater systems. Homes equipped with WaterSense-labeled fixtures send less water down the drain, reducing the risk of system overloading and failure. Lower flows also allow for smaller, more affordable onsite systems, reducing installation and replacement costs for homeowners.

As Congress considers Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations, we respectfully urge you to ensure that EPA's WaterSense program receives full and stable funding so that it can continue delivering these proven benefits to consumers, utilities, manufacturers, and communities nationwide.

Thank you for your leadership and continued support for programs that strengthen water affordability, efficiency, resilience, and economic growth.

Sincerely,

[Signatories to be listed by organization here]

January XX, 2026

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Grace Meng
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support Robust Funding for NIST Plumbing Research Program

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies,

The undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for robust funding in Fiscal Year 2027 for the NIST Plumbing Research Act. This important research program is helping to answer critical water quality, safety, and affordability questions. The outcomes of this program will positively impact how buildings and homes use water for decades to come by providing industry with the measurement science and applied research necessary to inform construction codes and standards and support the development of new technologies.

The authorization of the NIST Plumbing Research Program was included in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 after more than a decade of advocacy from manufacturers, trade associations, and other industry stakeholders. Continued investment in this program is essential, as plumbing design approaches, technologies, codes, and standards have not kept pace with the growing challenges faced by our sector, in large part due to long-standing technical knowledge gaps. Increasing awareness of the public-health and safety implications of building water quality—alongside rising pressures related to affordability, sustainability, and water security—has underscored the need for improved research into premise plumbing system design, installation, operation, and maintenance.

Premise plumbing systems are a critical component of the built environment, providing immediate access to safe drinking water and a reliable means of removing wastewater from homes, businesses, and institutions. The research being conducted by NIST is essential to

ensuring that plumbing systems can continue to evolve to address emerging concerns related to cost, water availability, environmental performance, and public health.

In collaboration with industry stakeholders, NIST has identified priority research needs and developed a research roadmap focused on the most pressing challenges facing the plumbing sector. As findings become available, this actionable research is being disseminated to standards-developing organizations, professional societies, educational institutions, and private-sector firms that rely on this information to update codes and standards, develop training and guidance materials, and advance plumbing technologies and design tools.

This important program currently receives funding through the general “National Measurement and Standards Laboratories” line item in the NIST budget. As Congress considers Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations, we respectfully urge you to include report language ensuring that the NIST Plumbing Research Program receives at least level funding, allowing this critical work to continue without disruption.

Thank you for your leadership and continued support for research that strengthens public health, water efficiency, affordability, and resilience in the built environment.

Sincerely,

[Signatories to be listed by organization here]