

Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR
2023-2024



Regional Water Providers Consortium

I am pleased to present our annual report for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. This past year focused on preparing for the future, and it is looking bright!



Last year, we updated and adopted our Strategic Plan which laid the groundwork for what we hope to accomplish in the next five years. We engaged deeply with our members on topics to help us set priorities that reflect the needs of our members and the sustainability of the organization.

Our small but mighty staff of four have worked for the Consortium for more than 70 years combined! That is a lot of collective wisdom. Looking to the future, we recognize the need to capture and share that institutional knowledge and put our house in order so we can seamlessly prepare for staff transitions over the next couple of years. We have been busy doing that work to ensure the viability and longevity of the organization.

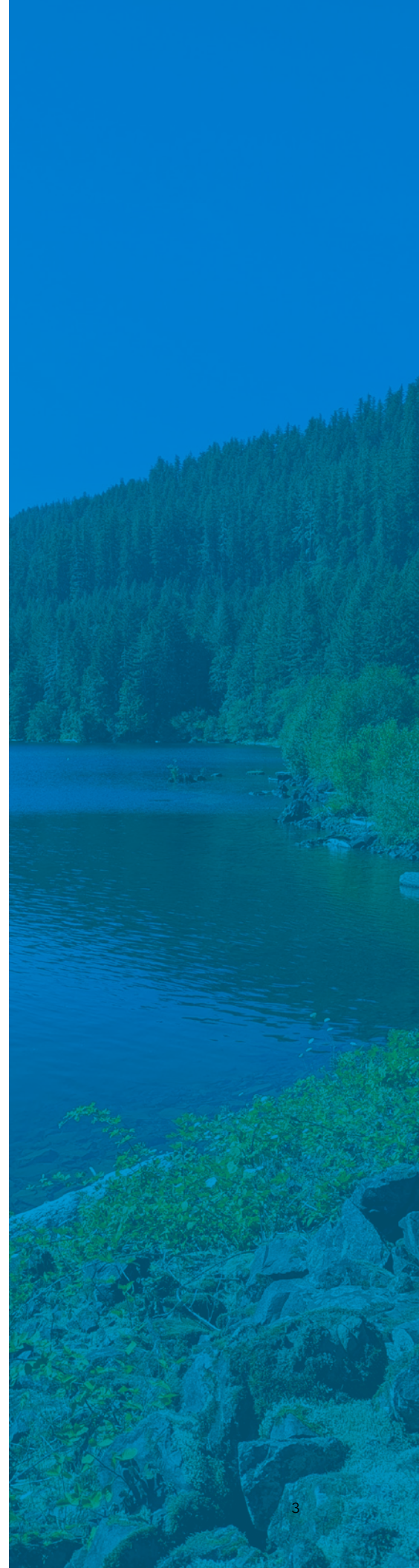
We have also been preparing for future disasters. Our approach is twofold: providing tools for our water provider members to support their resiliency planning and making sure the public has access to information about the importance of having a safe supply of drinking water during an emergency – in as many languages as possible.

Please read on to learn more about the projects we accomplished together. Thank you for trusting me to lead this organization. I am so proud of the work we do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca".

Rebecca Geisen
Managing Director



SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Sponsored three workshops and conducted one equipment drill for members to improve cyber-resilience, coordination with local hospitals, and work with local, state, and federal partners on emergency water distribution
- Adopted the Consortium's Five-Year Strategic Plan and updated the foundational Intergovernmental Agreement that created the Consortium
- Conducted multimedia campaigns in 12 languages which focused on emergency preparedness, water conservation, source water protection, and the value of water
- Partnered with the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) to develop and run a multimedia campaign to promote Public Alerts
- Completed emergency water how-to videos and outreach materials in Russian, Lao, Farsi/Persian, and Somali



Building Resiliency

Water is an essential backbone to our everyday lives, our region's economy, and public safety. Because of this, a large part of the Consortium's work is centered around projects that help ensure that the greater Portland metro area's drinking water systems are resilient to emergencies like wildfires, winter ice storms, extreme heat events, and earthquakes.

This year's work focused on addressing emerging threats, forging critical partnerships, emergency drinking water distribution planning, and helping the public prepare for emergencies. These efforts help our region prepare for, mitigate, and respond to future disasters.

Training and Collaboration

Water touches every sector in our community, and we know it will take many agencies and individuals from across the region to come together and prepare for, respond to, and recover from a large-scale disaster. This year, the Consortium worked with its members, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other partners to hold a series of workshops. These workshops brought resources and technical expertise to the region and focused on identifying and addressing emerging issues. Consortium members also learned about and practiced using emergency water treatment and distribution equipment at an equipment drill.

Cybersecurity Overview and Tabletop Exercise

Helped water providers from across Oregon understand and address cybersecurity risks.

Attendees: 50 | Sponsors: Consortium, EPA, Oregon Health Authority

Water, Public Health, and Healthcare Coordination Workshop and Tabletop Discussion

First-of-its-kind workshop between regional water and healthcare providers focused on identifying and exploring emergency drinking water needs.

Attendees: 75 | Sponsors: Consortium, EPA, NW Oregon Health Preparedness Organization

EPA Region 10 Emergency Drinking Water Workshop

Brought state primacy agencies, federal agencies, local emergency management, and water providers together for detailed discussion on locating, securing, and delivering emergency drinking water during a large-scale or regional drinking water outage.

Attendees: 75 | Sponsors: Consortium, EPA Region 10 (AK, ID, OR, and WA)

Emergency Equipment Drill

Water providers participated in the Consortium's sixth emergency drinking water equipment training and drill. See page 8-9 for more information.

Attendees: 102 | Sponsor: Consortium

Emergency Drinking Water Planning

Emergency Drinking Water Framework

The Consortium worked with regional county emergency managers and water providers to begin implementation of recommendations from the Framework. Work included a workshop and a grant to support counties and water providers with their planning. Several Consortium members also started preparing their own emergency drinking water plans using the Framework as a guide.



Public Outreach and Education

Together we use millions of gallons of water each day to make that morning cup of coffee, water our gardens, and flush our toilets. Local businesses use water to create products that we enjoy here and send across the globe. In fact, everything in our lives depends on water: public health, fire protection, our economy, wildlife, and outdoor recreation.

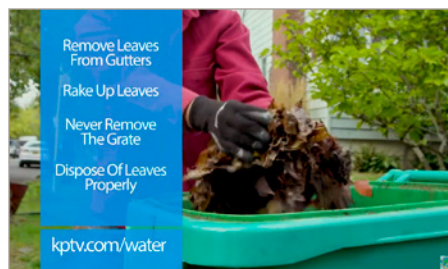
We recognize that water always has been and will continue to be our region's number one natural resource. As stewards of the region's drinking water sources, our members are committed to helping people use water wisely at home, in their gardens, and in their community now and into the future.

Each year, the Consortium runs multimedia campaigns and other public outreach programming that focuses on everyday activities we can do to conserve and protect water resources and prepare for emergencies.

Multimedia campaigns

“Clean Water. It’s Our Future.”

This year-round television campaign focused on water-safe alternatives to everyday activities that impact local waterways. The Consortium is one of many regional partners that support this campaign.



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

The water conservation campaign included messaging in English and Spanish. The campaign ran from June through mid-September on broadcast television, cable, radio, social media, and several other digital platforms. Messaging focused on seasonal irrigation tips, ways to save water indoors, and tips for protecting local waterways.



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

The emergency preparedness campaign included messaging in twelve languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, Farsi/Persian, Hindi, Khmer/Cambodian, Korean, Lao, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The campaigns ran from June through early fall on television, TriMet buses, the Oregonian, social media, and several other online platforms. Messaging focused on how to store, treat, and access water in an emergency.



“Sign up for Public Alerts”

The Consortium partnered with the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO) to develop and run a multimedia campaign from April through May 2024. The campaign included roadside billboards, TriMet bus ads, digital display ads, streaming audio ads, and social media ads. Messaging focused on promoting the PublicAlerts.org website as the place to go to sign up for emergency alerts and get locally-specific information on how to prepare for emergencies.



A separate media campaign report is available upon request.

Tabling at community events

One of the best ways to connect community members with the resources they need to use water wisely and to prepare for emergencies is to participate in local events. This year, the Consortium participated in the Lunar New Year Gala in February, the Marhaba Arab Celebration in April, and the Latino Cultural Festival in June. The Consortium connected directly with community members who speak Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese through these events.



Accessible Communications

The Consortium is committed to creating messaging and outreach resources that are accessible to the widest possible audience. These efforts include making digital assets accessible to screen readers, using plain language, and engaging native speakers to translate public outreach resources into multiple languages. This year's projects included:

- Working with contractors to increase accessibility of regionalH2O.org website and Drinking Water Advisory Tool
- Developing how-to videos, print pieces, web content, and other messaging resources that help people learn how to store, treat, and access water in emergencies. Languages completed this year: Lao, Farsi/Persian, Russian, and Somali
- Creating resources for Consortium members and regional community partners to use for clear, consistent messaging



Education

Children's Clean Water Festival: Co-sponsored the half-day festival for approximately 1,000 fourth graders that included stage shows, classroom presentations, and an exhibit hall at the Portland Community College Sylvania campus.



PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Emergency Equipment Drill



GOALS

- Provide opportunity for all attendees to learn about emergency water equipment, deployment, and operation
- Identify gaps, issues, and opportunities to improve how equipment is used
- Share best practices with each other
- Operate regional water treatment and distribution equipment to ensure it functions correctly and is interoperable
- Train new staff on how to operate and maintain equipment
- Practice treating and distributing water together

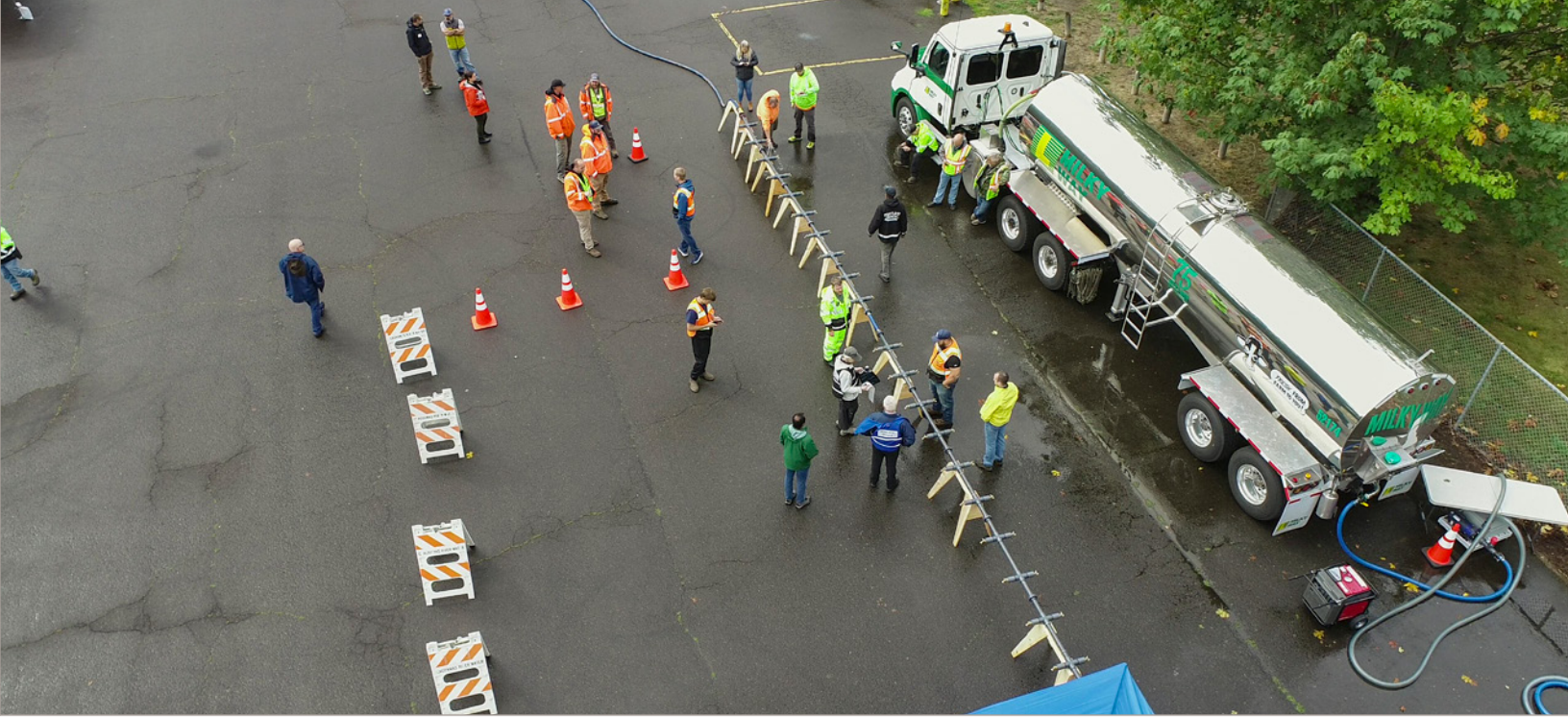
PARTICIPANTS

- 102 Attendees
- 29 Agencies

REGIONAL EMERGENCY WATER EQUIPMENT

- 9 Mobile water treatment systems
- 9 Mobile emergency water distribution systems
- 2 Portable emergency interconnections hose reels





BACKGROUND INFO

On September 26, 2023, the Consortium hosted a regional emergency drinking water equipment drill at Riverside Park in Clackamas, Oregon. The event included equipment demonstrations from providers located around the region and state. Participants successfully treated and delivered water using a treatment system, overland pipe, and a distribution system. Consortium members tested and used a new water distribution configuration from Tualatin Valley Water District.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Attendees learned about new treatment technologies, system maintenance, and better ways to distribute water to the public.

OPPORTUNITIES

Each time water providers gather to exercise emergency plans and equipment, they become better prepared to respond to future emergencies. The Consortium will continue to bring regional water provider staff together to discuss equipment improvements and developments in water treatment, coordinate peer-to-peer learning about regional water treatment and distribution capabilities, explore water hauling equipment grants and contracts, and host drills and exercises to support water provider preparedness and resiliency.



Collaboration and Partnerships

The Consortium is built on partnerships; together we support and learn from each other. This work began in 1997 with the development of the Regional Water Supply Plan which included forecasting the region's water needs 50 years into the future. Today, this collaborative approach is integral to every aspect of our work which includes population forecasting for future water needs, water supply management, legislative advocacy, and increasing water sector resilience. The Consortium also partners with regional, state, and national agencies and organizations to highlight the importance of drinking water, share resources, and foster stewardship of our region's drinking water sources. Collectively we strive to be a trusted source for drinking water information now and into the future.



Collaborate with regional, state, and national partners

Consortium Member Support: Staff provided programming, resources, and training opportunities to members.

Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization (RDPO): Participated in several RDPO workgroups and committees. Held a Showcase for the Disaster Messaging Work Group (DMWG) and the Consortium's Water Communicators Network which included sharing lessons learned from several of the DMWG's projects with 40 attendees.

Environmental Protection Agency: Strengthened connections with EPA and collaborated on three workshops (page 5) that highlighted the importance of water in emergency planning and response work.

Alliance For Water Efficiency: Contributed to the Education Working Committee and attended regional and annual meetings.

Share information and resources

- **Oregon Department of Emergency Management Oregon Prepared Conference:** Presented information on the Emergency Drinking Water Framework and the multilingual how-to video projects.
- **AWWA Pacific NW Section Conference and Waterworks School:** Presented information on the Emergency Drinking Water Framework, best management practices, and workforce development initiatives.
- **Camp Creek Fire Response:** Consortium staff provided technical assistance to the Portland Water Bureau in August-September 2023 during its Camp Creek Fire incident response. This hands-on experience helped staff better understand potential regional messaging needs for future incidents.
- **Population Estimate and Forecasts:** The Consortium worked with Portland State University's Population Research Center to prepare population forecasts and historic population and household data. Water providers use this information when estimating future water demands.





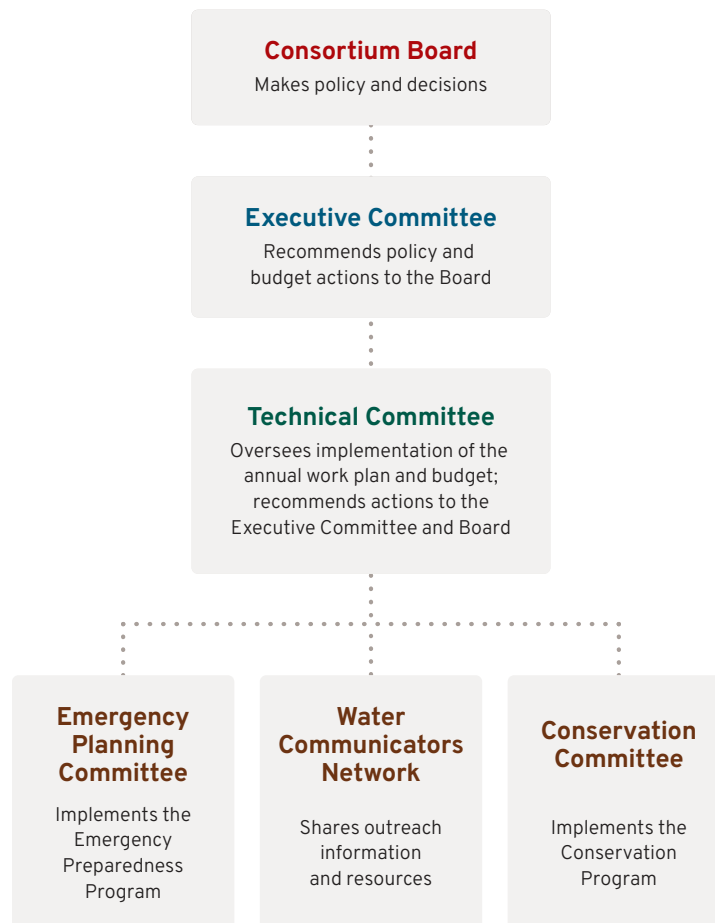
How We Work

As part of preparing for the future, the Consortium must ensure it functions well as an organization and that its guiding documents reflect current practices. This year, the Board adopted an updated Intergovernmental Agreement which governs the operation of the organization. The amendments included removing outdated language and making changes to reflect how the organization operates today and into the future.

- **Strategic Planning Work:** Engaged the Consortium Technical Committee in facilitated “deep-dive” discussions on staffing, equity, water supply planning, and outreach to help identify priorities, challenges, and solutions as we look at our five-year planning horizon.
- **Member Relations:** The Consortium welcomed Lake Grove Water District as its 26th member. Staff also conducted several one-on-one onboarding meetings with new member staff from member entities throughout the year. The City of Newberg left the Consortium at the end of June due to budget constraints.



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE CONSORTIUM BOARD AND COMMITTEES



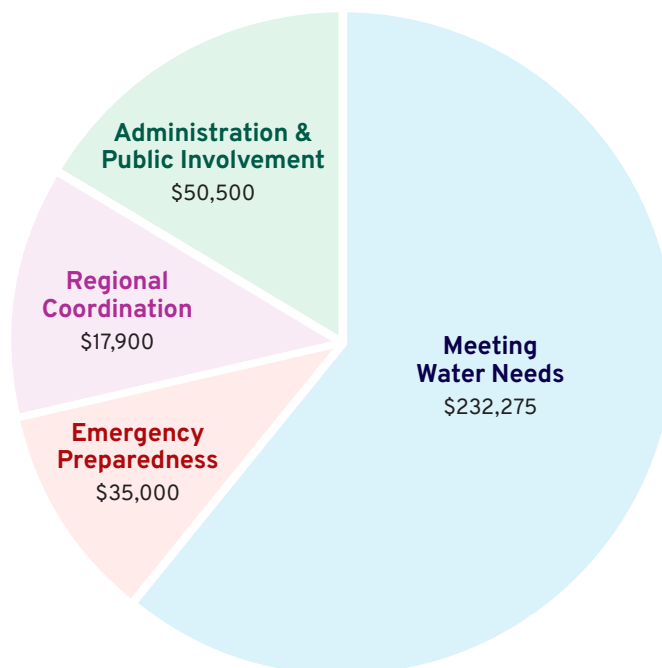
Fiscal Year 2023 – 2024 Budget and Expenses

The Consortium's budget is supported through the membership dues of its water provider members. Dues are based on the number of connections and quantity of water served by each member organization. Each voting member has an equal voice in the Consortium's work regardless of the amount it contributes to the Consortium's budget.

The Consortium's budget was \$1,197,016 and 89% of it was expended. Unspent contingency, personnel, and some materials and services contributed to the under-expenditure.

Consortium staff provided members with bimonthly expense reports throughout the year. The Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Consortium Work Plan and Budget and final expense report are available on the Consortium's website at regionalH2O.org/member-page.

CONSORTIUM BUDGET ALLOCATION BY PROGRAM AREA



The Consortium budget also includes \$826,456 for personnel/overhead, \$6,000 for training/travel, \$10,000 for contingency and a \$18,000 carryover from Fiscal Year 2022-23.

CONSORTIUM MEMBERS AND REGIONAL WATER SOURCES 2023-2024

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*
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 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*

CONSORTIUM STAFF

Managing Director
Rebecca Geisen

Management Assistant
Patty Burk

Program Manager
Bonny Cushman

Program Specialist
Riley Berger





1120 SW 5th Avenue, Suite 405, Portland, Oregon 97204
503-823-7528 www.regionalH2O.org

PRINTED ON PAPER WITH RECYCLED CONTENT