

Five-Year Strategic Plan

OCTOBER 2018



REGIONAL WATER PROVIDERS CONSORTIUM



OUR MISSION:

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

www.regionalh2o.org

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Introduction

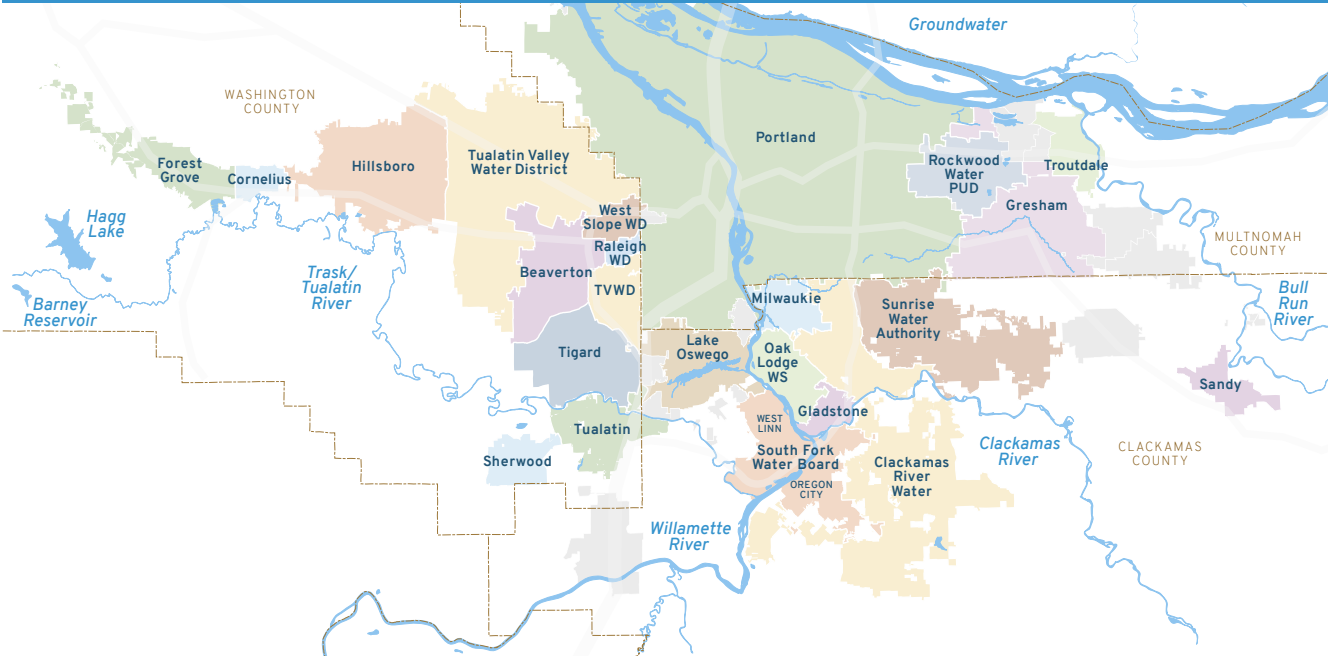
The Regional Water Providers Consortium (Consortium) is a collaborative and coordinating organization that works to improve the planning and management of municipal water supplies in the greater Portland, Oregon metropolitan region. Established in 1997, the Consortium works with its members in emergency preparedness, water conservation, and regional coordination.

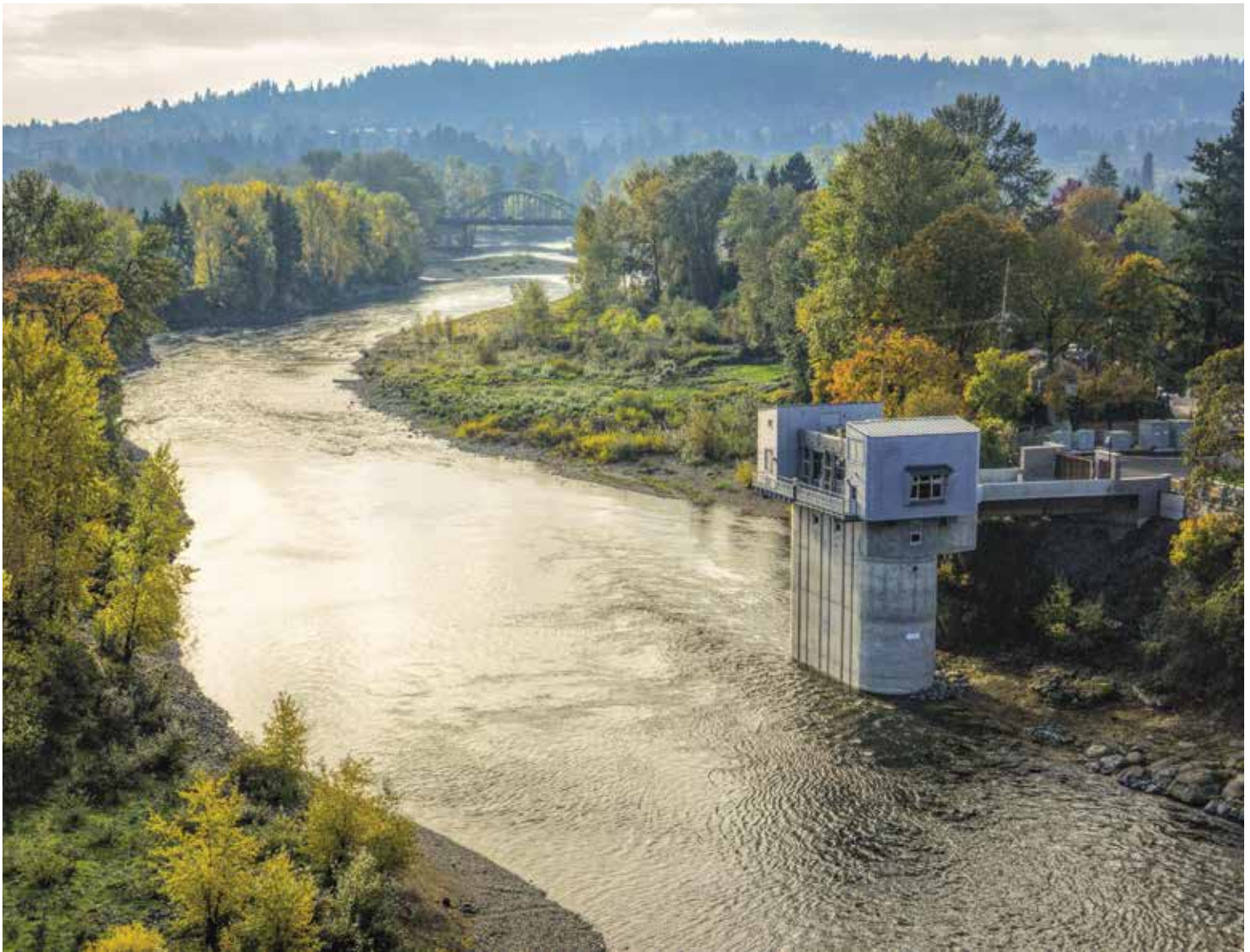
The Consortium Board, comprised of elected officials from each member agency, adopted an updated Strategic Plan in October 2018 to lay the groundwork for the next 20 years. The first Five-Year Strategic Plan was presented to the Consortium Board in 2001 and has been updated multiple times. The Consortium completed a tremendous amount of work over the past two decades including implementation of robust regional water conservation and emergency preparedness outreach campaigns, development of water supply planning and resiliency tools, receiving \$2 million in grants for emergency water response equipment and studies, updates to the Regional Water Supply Plan, and strengthening of regional partnerships. We understand that working together collectively on issues of mutual importance benefits our drinking water sources and systems, water providers, the region, and our customers.

CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

- 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
- Oak Lodge Water Services
- Portland, City of
- Raleigh Water District
- Rockwood Water PUD
- Sandy, 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

Consortium members and regional water sources





The Lake Oswego Tigard Water Partnership's river intake pump station on the Clackamas River

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF LAKE OSWEGO

2018 – 2023 Strategic Plan

The 2018 Strategic Plan was developed during a 12-month planning period by the Consortium Board with significant input from the Executive Committee, Consortium Technical Committee, and Consortium staff. The three working committees of the Consortium offered their technical expertise in developing the strategic initiatives and reviewing the plan. The participatory process allowed us to take a fresh look at our mission and values, conduct an updated Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis (see Appendix), and refine our priorities for the next five years.

The 2018 Plan focuses our work in three major strategic areas:

- **Meeting Water Needs**
- **Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency**
- **Strengthening Regional Partnerships**

The 2018 Strategic Plan update reflects a leaner, more concise plan with broad strategic initiatives that will help guide the Consortium’s annual work plan and budget for the next five years. The plan highlights the Consortium’s commitment to improving outreach and access to resources for our diverse communities and to support our member’s equity efforts through culturally competent translation of resources, videos, and investment in Spanish language media. The plan continues to emphasize communicating to the public about the importance of municipal water systems and their role in protecting public health, emergency preparedness, fire protection, and economic development.

The Strategic Plan builds on the Consortium’s strengths of leveraging our collective knowledge and resources to communicate the value of water, be prepared for emergencies, and to be good stewards of our water resources. The Consortium speaks with one voice on issues affecting drinking water supplies, uses economies of scale to cost-effectively complete projects that benefit our members and the community, and fosters strong regional partnerships.

“The fact that we can join together as water providers and have the expertise of our staff combined can produce a much better program than if one provider just tried to do it all for themselves. That’s been a real strength of the Consortium.”

– JIM DUGGAN, COMMISSIONER,
TUALATIN VALLEY WATER
DISTRICT

Barney Reservoir

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF HILLSBORO



Consortium Mission and Values

“Being at the table gives me and my community a voice and that’s very important to my community. They want a voice at the table, and this is one way I can do it.”

COMMISSIONER NANCY GIBSON, OAK LODGE WATER SERVICES

Our Mission

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

We do this by:

- **Providing a member-based network of peers to share knowledge, technical expertise, and resources.**
- **Promoting stewardship and coordinating regional water conservation programs.**
- **Strengthening regional emergency preparedness among water providers to safeguard the region and our communities/customers.**
- **Leveraging member resources to achieve economies of scale.**

Our Values

These principles guide how we work together and with our partners:

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.

Serving Our Members and Our Community

Water is abundant in the Pacific Northwest and flows freely from our faucets – so it is easy to take it for granted. Water providers work diligently to ensure that their customers have access to safe, reliable water. In order to do this, water providers must build and maintain a complex system of pipes, hydrants, treatment systems, and reservoirs while also planning for aging infrastructure, population growth, new regulations, seismic hazards, and climate change. The Consortium's work supports its members to ensure that the region has a long-term, reliable, efficient, and safe water supply.

K

ey activities that support our region and our members:

- Conservation program implementation meets public education requirements of OAR Division 86 – Water Management and Conservation Plans. Educational programs, activities, and conservation materials are presented through schools, workshops, and community events and are also part of multi-language, multi-media campaigns.
- Partnership with the Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization assists water providers in acquiring grants for regional water treatment and distribution equipment and interconnection studies, and highlights the importance of water in emergency preparedness.
- Large-scale drills and tabletop exercises ensure that water provider staff have the critical skills and hands-on experience that is needed to address realistic scenarios affecting the region’s water supplies.
- Consortium members save ratepayer money by pooling resources to complete projects that benefit the entire region. Ready-to-use water conservation and emergency preparedness modules include news articles, social media posts, graphics, and presentations for members to use in their own outreach materials and websites.
- Consortium staff participate in working committees and track water-related legislation, information, opportunities, and resources with a variety of local, regional, state, and national groups.
- By participating in the Consortium, water provider staff, managers, and their elected officials have access to subject matter experts, sub-regional partnership opportunities, and the ability to develop and share resources with one another.

“Having the ability to bring all the experience and knowledge into one place at one time, contributes to a better solution. The Consortium provides just that opportunity.”

– GENERAL MANAGER BRIAN STAHL, ROCKWOOD WATER PEOPLE’S UTILITY DISTRICT

2018 Major Focus Areas

The planning process reaffirmed three major focus areas for the Consortium. Within each focus area we examined and developed the most critical strategic initiatives to be accomplished over the next five years. The strategic initiatives will help address major challenges facing our region and help us leverage emerging opportunities.

- Meeting Water Needs
- Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency
- Strengthening Regional Partnerships

MAJOR FOCUS AREA #1

Meeting Water Needs

This first major focus area grounds the work of the Consortium to the Regional Water Supply Plan (RWSP) most specifically as it relates to the efficient use of our limited water supplies. The RWSP is the foundation for the creation and work of the Consortium. Since the RWSP adoption in 1996, the Consortium has evolved to meet the changing needs of its members.

The Consortium continues its role in implementing regional programs that support members, but does not direct the provision of specific water supplies in the region. The Consortium plays a significant role in regional water conservation efforts, and provides public education on other water-related issues of regional importance. Over the next five years the Consortium is focused on broadening its messaging to reach a more diverse audience so all members of the community can benefit from Consortium resources, learn about the value of water, and how to use water more efficiently. The Consortium will also focus on addressing emerging issues related to communication, changes in water demand, climate change, and water quality.

Strategic Initiatives

- **Make best use of available water resources and partnerships to meet regional water needs as outlined in the Regional Water Supply Plan.**
- **Provide programs and resources that help water providers meet water conservation requirements.**
- **Provide public education and outreach materials that promote conservation, source water protection, and value of water.**
- **Anticipate and respond to changes in demand, population, and customer/public expectations.**
- **Increase accessibility of messaging and outreach materials to diverse audiences and stakeholders.**



Rockwood Water PUD Groundwater System

PHOTO COURTESY OF ROCKWOOD WATER PEOPLE'S UTILITY DISTRICT



Emergency Water Distribution Trailer

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLACKAMAS RIVER WATER

MAJOR FOCUS AREA #2

Emergency Preparedness and Resiliency

Since 2012, the Consortium has expanded its emphasis on emergency preparedness to include public outreach focused on the important role citizens play in regional preparedness and what water providers are doing to increase their resiliency. Consortium members work collaboratively to incorporate resiliency into their planning to minimize disruption to water service following an emergency or catastrophic event.

The Oregon Resilience Plan (ORP) presented to the 77th Oregon Legislative Assembly in 2013 provides a 50-year road map to ensure that Oregon can quickly recover from a Cascadia subduction zone earthquake. The Consortium's preparedness efforts support the ORP and other regional, state and federal initiatives and include resources for its members to identify interconnections, train together, and educate the public about the importance of having an emergency water supply following a disaster. Consortium members share their experiences, knowledge, and technical information with each other to collectively make the region stronger and more resilient.

Strategic Initiatives

- Educate public about emergency preparedness and the importance of water.
- Obtain and develop resources that will help members and the region support preparedness goals and requirements.
- Facilitate planning, projects, and training opportunities that strengthen members' ability to plan for, respond to, and recover from extreme events.
- Collaborate with state and regional stakeholders to improve regional communication, emergency preparedness, response and recovery.
- Support each other through data and resource sharing and mutual aid.

MAJOR FOCUS AREA #3

Strengthening Regional Partnerships

The Consortium is built on partnerships and working together. Its strength is in speaking with one voice on issues of mutual interest, being a forum to discuss and address issues, and achieve economies of scale. That said, there is work to be done to ensure Consortium members and their elected officials understand the value the organization brings to their respective agencies so that they continue to participate in, benefit from, and support this important work. The Consortium brings together decades of collective knowledge and experience to the region. This collective experience is a valued resource to the greater community in conservation, emergency preparedness, and regional water supply planning.

Strategic Initiatives

- Expand awareness of the Consortium’s value, mission, programs, and the benefits of membership to water providers.
- Build strong community relationships and be the trusted source for regional drinking water related information.
- Maintain Board and staff continuity and effectiveness through succession planning, effective onboarding, and member engagement.
- Address issues of importance through legislative advocacy.
- Facilitate a network of peers that members can rely on for information, expertise, resources, and sub-regional partnerships.



PHOTO COURTESY OF REGIONAL WATER PROVIDERS CONSORTIUM

Implementation Strategies

The 2018 Strategic Plan is a living document that will be revisited by the Consortium Board annually as it develops budgets and work plans. As part of the plan development, the Consortium identified a list of work tasks to implement the strategic initiatives over the planning horizon. Work tasks include roles and responsibilities for implementation and metrics where applicable.

Each October, the Consortium Board begins the preparation of the coming year’s work plan and budget. At that time the Board will review and evaluate the Consortium’s progress on its strategic initiatives to ensure tasks are on track, still relevant, and important to the success of the overall plan. Changes and modifications can be made, if needed.

General Implementation Strategies

1 Managing Director/Board and Consortium Technical Committee (CTC) Chair Check-ins

A strong relationship between the Managing Director, CTC Chair, and Board Chair can provide an effective forum for considering emerging issues and strategies.

By holding regular check-in meetings, the Managing Director, CTC Chair, and Board Chair can assess progress on strategic initiatives.

- These may be held quarterly or as needed.
- The goal is to provide sounding board and support for the Managing Director to address issues related to the strategic plan implementation.
- Meetings should end with clear action items to be addressed.

2 Strategic Initiative Milestone Reviews

While the Consortium staff, CTC, and Board will annually review progress on the entire strategic plan, it may be helpful to identify small teams of staff and possibly Board members to do a quick assessment on progress of a single strategic initiative.

- Milestone reviews should be held periodically for each of the three major focus areas and provide a forum where a quick assessment of progress can be made. The strategic initiatives are reviewed quickly for key milestones met, or milestones in danger of not being met.
- The focus will be on a quick assessment of items in danger of not being met. The problem will not typically be solved in the course of the meeting, but a sub-committee or subset of staff should be identified to examine it more carefully.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF SHERWOOD



PHOTO COURTESY OF REGIONAL WATER PROVIDERS CONSORTIUM

- The strengths, weaknesses and threats analysis included in this plan will be annually reviewed to determine if there are any new threats or opportunities that need to be addressed.
- Action steps include assignments to determine strategies to address roadblocks encountered and to develop a plan.

Consortium Board Member Implementation Strategies

The Consortium staff and CTC members are primarily responsible for developing annual work plans and strategic plan implementation. However, as an intergovernmental organization, the Board also takes seriously its role in ensuring that the Consortium meets its mission. As such, Board members have identified a number of important steps that they can take to contribute to the overall success of the plan.

Board members will be willing and available to:

- Advocate at the legislative level on issues related to water resources, conservation, and emergency preparedness.
- Provide opportunities for the sharing of technical information between staff and Board.
- Share resources with respective boards, councils, local partners, and customers.
- Reach out to newly elected or appointed representatives as they join or attend Consortium meetings and events to assist with onboarding and ensuring effective service.
- Serve as ambassadors for the Consortium for other water providers, staff and elected officials.
- Support career development in the water industry to attract new people into the field.

The implementation strategies above will be supported by regular check-ins at Board meetings to provide Board members the opportunity to report on activities and identify upcoming opportunities. Consortium staff will also help identify opportunities for Board engagement.

Facing page: Bull Run Lake

PHOTO COURTESY OF PORTLAND WATER BUREAU



Appendix

Updated SWOT Analysis

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis offered an opportunity to update the areas of greatest concern for the Consortium, and leverage some of the key strengths and opportunities. These brainstorming sessions with the Board and the CTC were used to provide context for the strategic initiatives developed for each of the main focus areas.

Strengths and weaknesses are typically internally focused and highlight the factors that influence the organization from within.

STRENGTHS

Staff

Regional messaging with broad support vs. messaging from single entity

More effective and able to achieve economies of scale by leveraging funds

Willingness to share information

Benefits to mutual partners

Regional mindset

Network of peers

Consortium brand created

Understanding if one of us fails, we all fail

Combination of staff and political leadership

Suite of outreach materials for providers to use

Collective knowledge and expertise

Trust built over time

Longevity (20+ years of working together and evolving to meet needs)

Networking opportunity for elected officials, managers, and provider staff

Multiple water sources

WEAKNESSES

Varying priorities by members

Challenge of implementing inter-governmental recommendations

Challenge of articulating what we do

Old messaging/strategy on conservation

Homogeneous nature of membership (missing agriculture, storm/wastewater, Metro – land use)

Member participation and getting a quorum has at times been a challenge during the Consortium's history

Unsure what members value in organization

Redundancy of messaging materials between Consortium and individual members

Poor marketing to our members

Need for more meaningful and consistent messaging to member Councils and Boards or other specific audiences

Articulating monetary value back to Boards/City councils

Lack of knowledge transfer as we prepare for new members and retirements

Variability in funding levels affects ability to implement programs

Lack of public outreach directed towards diverse audiences



Children's Clean Water Festival

PHOTO COURTESY OF REGIONAL WATER PROVIDERS CONSORTIUM



Tualatin River

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF HILLSBORO

Following an analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses, the group shifted its focus to external opportunities and threats. These are external factors that may either offer new possibilities, or present threats to the success of the Consortium.

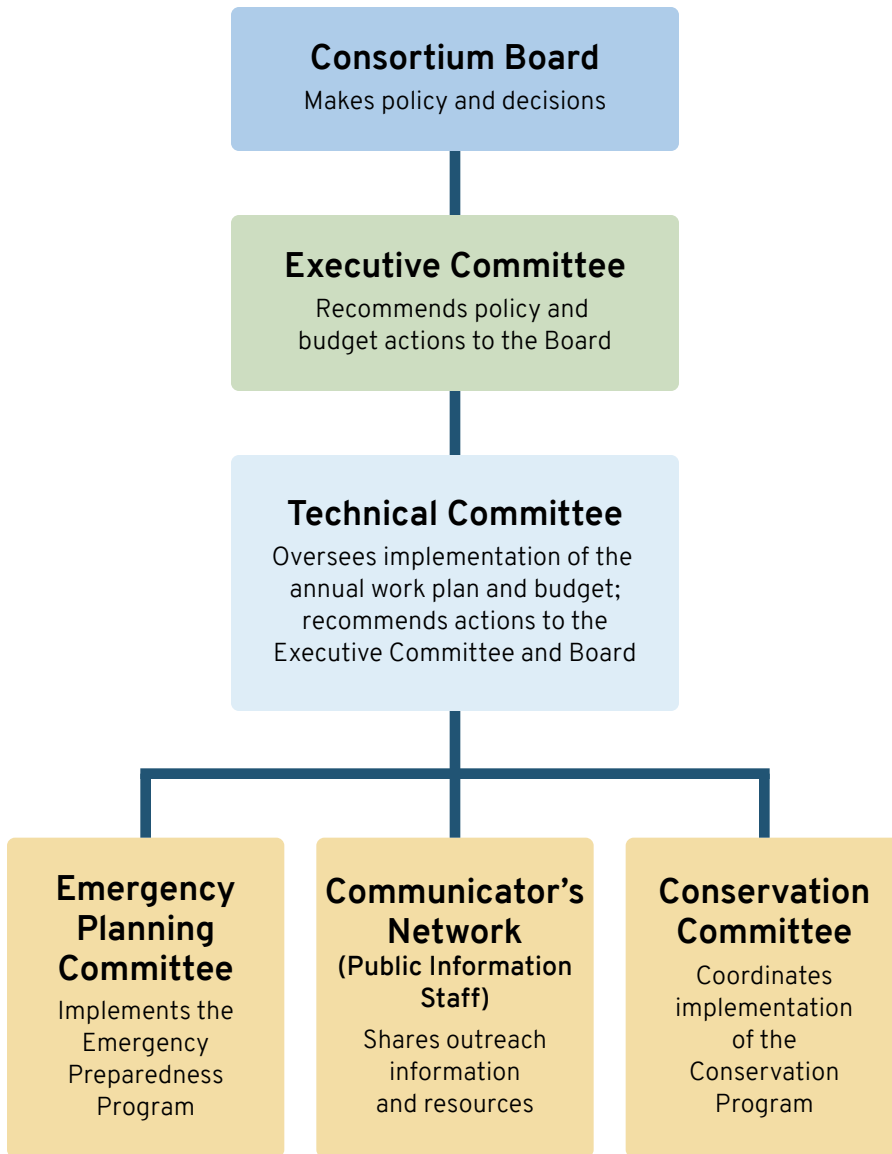
OPPORTUNITIES

- Conveying collaborative coordinated message
- Consortium has good story to tell
- Increased focus on emergency preparedness and regional equipment
- Multiple venues to communicate in timely fashion
- Potential to acquire grants as regional organization
- Ability to strengthen public connection to local water provider
- Availability of multiple water sources
- Creative regional leadership
- Increase education and awareness to public on water resource issues
- Customers care about clean water and environment

THREATS

- Lack of active engagement from Metro
- Urban Growth Boundary and Comprehensive Plan changes and need for education of planning entities
- Water rights and regulatory pressure
- Not staying relevant to decision-makers
- Water related issues that affect perceptions of drinking water providers (e.g. lead)
- Individual entities losing regional perspective and importance of working together
- Limited water supply
- Natural disaster preparedness and resiliency
- Competing regulations
- Funding challenges
- Low public awareness of water issues and infrastructure needs
- Climate change
- Emerging contaminants of concern and additional regulations

Consortium Committees



CONSORTIUM STAFF

Managing Director
Rebecca Geisen

Management Assistant
Patty Burk

Program Coordinator
Bonny Cushman

Program Assistant
Katy Asher



1120 SW 5th Avenue, Suite 600, Portland, Oregon 97204
503-823-7528 www.regionalh2o.org

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