

# The Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership

The Mid-Coast region of Oregon is one of four areas<sup>1</sup> that began piloting a new approach to water planning in 2016 with the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD). The purpose of the place-based integrated water resources planning efforts was to implement the Oregon's 2012 *Integrated Water Resources Strategy*, which directs OWRD to help communities collaboratively develop and implement integrated solutions to address instream and out-of-stream water challenges and needs within a geographic scope defined by stakeholders. This regional plan will inform updates to the statewide Integrated Water Resources Strategy.

This plan – *Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership Water Action Plan* – synthesizes the cumulative work of the Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership (MCWPP), or the Partnership, and serves as a living document to provide the Partnership the ability to amend its actions to achieve its goals as time and circumstances change. Definitions fundamental to this plan are in Appendix A.

## Mission, Vision, and Goals of the Partnership

### Mission

The purpose of the Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership is to develop an inclusive community forum that examines water use in the region, identifies current and potential water challenges, and creates a unified plan to balance water needs.

### Vision

Regional partners ensuring balanced water resources for the environment, the economy, and coastal communities.

### Goals

Work collaboratively to develop an Integrated Water Resources Plan for the Mid-Coast Region:

- Develop a sustainable water supply for consumptive uses that also protects the environment, supports healthy watersheds, and is resilient to climate change stressors and natural hazards.
- Balance the needs of our ecosystems, our economies, and our communities.
- Develop cross-boundary solutions that help neighbors work together to achieve additive effects.
- Develop and implement integrated regional water management strategies for improved water quality and quantity as well as provide fair access.
- Increase awareness about regional water needs, challenges, and opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> The other three areas include the Lower John Day Sub-basin, Upper Grande Ronde Sub-basin, and Harney Basin.

- Improve the resilience of water management infrastructure by identifying emergency water sources and taking steps to access those water resources when needed, and repair water system infrastructure.

## History and Drivers of the Planning Process

The Mid-Coast water planning initiative launched in 2016 with a grant from OWRD to the City of Newport to co-convene a collaboration of stakeholders and develop strategies that would address the following key drivers:

- Address aging infrastructure, improve water conservation efforts, enhance regional water supply options, and more effectively share water among uses and users;
- Relieve late season pressure on rivers, streams, and tributaries while meeting water needs for and coastal communities and local industry;
- Create redundancies to enhance resilience during drought, storms, and other natural vulnerabilities; and
- Create a learning and action network for small water providers vulnerable to environmental and regulatory challenges.

During its first meeting, the Mid-Coast water planning initiative became the Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership. The Partnership is a voluntary association that actively seeks to include diverse perspectives, interests, and expertise regarding water issues on the Mid-Coast. Organizations or individuals may join the Partnership at any time by agreeing to the terms of the [Charter](#). The Partnership includes, but is not limited to, representation and input from municipal water providers; special districts/water districts; industrial water users; local businesses and economic development organizations; coastal residents, rural homeowners, and landowners; conservation/environmental organizations; timber/forestry groups; agricultural groups; fishing groups; recreation groups, academic/scientific community; city and county governments; state and federal agencies; tribes; and elected officials. For an updated list of members, see <https://www.midcoastwaterpartners.com>.

During the September 2016 MCWPP kickoff meeting, stakeholders articulated desired outcomes for their planning process. The outcomes included:

### Key Water Supply Challenges

Some water providers currently face water shortages. Future shortages are projected due to decreasing supplies and increasing demand, especially during peak tourist season.

Low summer stream flows and limited water storage create water shortages for both communities and stream flows critical for fish, recreation, and industry.

Regional communities need to be better prepared to address natural hazards, vulnerabilities, and emergency preparedness.

- Increased awareness about regional water needs, challenges, and opportunities.
- Development of cross-boundary solutions that help neighbors work together to achieve additive effects.
- Integrated regional water management strategies that are planned and implemented to improve water quality and quantity, ensuring fair access.
- Sustainable water supply for consumptive uses while protecting ecological needs.
- Improved resilience of built infrastructure and watersheds.
- Flow management to store more winter water and raise the water table to alleviate summer low-flow conditions.
- Incentives for water conservation.
- Enhanced understanding of the role of existing rules, regulations, and resources associated with water management and use.
- Water rights that benefit everyone.
- A process that is timely, is multi-decadal in its vision, and is foundational to obtaining additional sources of funding for implementation.

From the outset, the Partnership approached this initiative as a long-term vision that incorporates timely and implementable strategies, and creates a strong foundational plan for obtaining additional sources of funding for implementation. The Partnership determined it would realize its vision for the Action Plan in five steps, in accordance with [OWRD guidelines](#). The Partnership added a sixth step in 2020 b to ensure this Action Plan acknowledges the importance of incorporating adaptive management principles as the plan is implemented. All steps are summarized in Figure 1.

Step 1 (September 2016–May 2017): Partners convened to initiate the planning process, developed a work plan and schedule, and created an inclusive process. The partnership charter, which defines the purpose and goals of the Partnership, and documents how members agree to work together, was adopted on March 29, 2017.

Step 2 (May 2017–February 2018): Partners formed four study groups and worked with a consultant team to produce four technical reports (Appendix B) characterizing the Mid-Coast’s water quantity, water quality, ecology, and built systems.

Step 3 (February 2018 – September 2020): Partners self-organized into three separate working groups to better understand the current and future instream/ecological water needs and challenges as well as the water needs and challenges of municipalities/special districts, self-supplied water users (rural domestic, agricultural, industrial). The groups spent time learning about the issues together and received technical assistance from multiple agency partners. The working groups produced an agreed upon set of critical issues that formed the basis for strategy development.

Step 4 (September 2020–June 2021): Partners developed and launched a new website and drafted the plan. Specific strategies that address each key issue were identified and prioritized, and performance metrics were developed to assess progress in implementing strategies.

Step 5 (June 2021–October 2021): Stakeholders reviewed the plan and edits were incorporated.

Step 6 (November 2021 onward): Plan implementation, monitoring of progress, and adjustments to the plan based on emerging issues and learning that occurs during implementation.

### **Partnership Structure and Participation – Balanced Representation**

This plan was developed with a diversity of entities and individuals living and working in the mid-coast of Oregon. This includes representatives of municipal water providers, special districts and water districts, industrial water users, local businesses, economic development organizations, coastal residents, rural homeowners, landowners, conservation organizations, academic entities, local governments, state and federal agencies, tribes, elected officials, and entities representing agricultural, forestry, fishing, and recreation interests. Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership charter signatories played a key role in the development of the plan. A list of MCWPP partners can be found [here](#).

In addition, extensive outreach has occurred throughout the six-year process to develop the plan, including:

- Presentations to city councils within the geographic scope of the partnership;
- Press releases to regional media;
- Recorded webinars describing planning steps and outcomes (while creating opportunities for feedback and guidance);
- Surveys to obtain feedback on specific elements of plan development;
- Monthly newsletters to share progress on plan development;
- The creation of a website to capture each step of the planning process and key outcomes; such as storymaps, and compiled information and data;
- Welcome sessions for new partners interested in joining and engaging with the partnership during the development of the plan;
- Public meetings; and
- Targeted outreach to tribes, non-English speaking community members, and small local businesses and industry

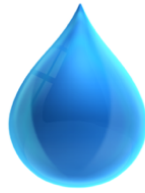
The Partnership is guided in its work by co-conveners and a Coordinating Committee and is supported by a dedicated Partnership Coordinator as well as a team of consultants. The co-conveners have changed during the course of the planning process, but are committed to providing a neutral and balanced forum that ensures diverse partners learn together and work cooperatively on plan development and implementation. The Coordinating Committee meets monthly and advises on overall process design. The Partnership is the decision-making body

and operates consistent with the terms of the Charter. The Partnership Coordinator oversees the work of the Partnership and keeps partners connected to the process and to each other. The planning process has been supported by various consultants over time in the development of various technical products and the plan.

- The Partnership strived for a balanced representation of interests in the composition of the Partnership, Coordinating Committee, and sub-groups for each planning step. A list of participants in each step, along with their affiliation, is provided in Appendix C.
- The global COVID-19 pandemic required the Partnership to conduct all of its meetings remotely from March 2020 until plan adoption. Prior to the pandemic, meetings with the full Partnership were held 2-4 times per year in-person, with an opportunity to learn from each other and build networks around water issues. Sub-groups were convened and met as needed to accomplish work in between Partnership meetings. Attendance at Partnership meetings ranged from 20 to 70 participants.

### **Plan Adoption and State Recognition**

The plan will be reviewed and approved by consensus, as defined in the Charter, by all those who signed the Charter and reaffirmed their commitment at the beginning of the strategy development phase. Where appropriate, partners and their organizations will be asked to develop a declaration of cooperation affirming their commitment to implementation. This may require individuals working within their organizations to discuss and clarify the organization's level of support. A draft resolution will be provided to local governments for their consideration. Prior to submitting the plan to the state for recognition, the Planning group will undertake a self-assessment to determine whether the plan is likely to satisfy the criteria set forth by the state.



## Oregon Mid-Coast Region Integrated Water Management Plan

The kickoff meeting for the Mid-Coast Region Integrated Water Management Plan occurred in September of 2016 and concluded in the Fall of 2021. The following is the 5-step process used to develop the plan. Step 6 is the process that occurs during plan implementation.



Figure 1. The six-step planning process to complete an integrated water management plan for Oregon's Mid-Coast.

## Public Participation

All meetings of the Partnership were advertised via emails and press releases and were open to the public. Meetings were held in the evenings with food provided for all participants. Prior to the pandemic, meetings were held throughout the Mid-Coast (in Newport, Yachats, Siletz, and Gleneden Beach) to encourage participation from different parts of the region.

The Partnership maintains an email list that anyone can join. As of plan adoption the list has XXX subscribers. All meeting materials of the Partnership are maintained online for easy access. Anyone is invited to join the Partnership at any time by signing the charter. The only condition for participation is that they act in accordance with the charter.

The Partnership organized four separate field tours (two in 2017, one in 2018, and one in 2019) to learn about water conditions and challenges from partners. Each of the field tours were open to the public and had high participation. The field tours were recorded, and the recordings were shared online, in email blasts, and via the Facebook page.

A public event was held at the Hatfield Marine Science Center in partnership with the Center and the Surfrider organization. The event was comprised of a panel of Partners representing different water interests who talked about how balance could be achieved. Agency partners were on hand both before and after the panel with information on water quantity, water quality, and ecology.

Presentations have been delivered to the County, to cities, and to partner organizations throughout the planning process. There has been coverage of the effort in the newspaper and the co-conveners and Partnership Coordinator have been interviewed on the radio.

The Partnership, its members, and consultants supporting the Partnership have produced numerous technical products to describe water conditions in the Mid-Coast. There was a recognition that many of these documents, sometimes exceeding 100 pages, were not accessible to the general public. As a result, these technical products were translated into interactive StoryMaps with visual elements and accessible narrative with both an English and a Spanish version. The StoryMaps were launched in early 2021. In addition, an information-rich website was created.

In late 2018 the Partnership launched a community survey and listening sessions with the help of Oregon's Kitchen Table (see results below). A second round of engagement with Oregon's Kitchen Table is planned for late 2021 to gather public input on strategies being considered.

## Planning Area

The Lincoln County administrative boundary comprised the original geographic scope of this initiative in 2016 when the Partnership was first formed. Since then, the geographic scope was refined to include the following two USGS cataloging units: 17100204 – Siletz-Yaquina subbasin (Salmon River, Siletz Bay-Ocean Tributaries, Siletz River, Depoe Bay-Ocean Tributaries, and Yaquina River) and 17100205 – Alsea subbasin (Beaver Creek-Ocean Tributaries, Alsea River, and Yachats River) (Figure 2). The southern portion of the Alsea subbasin that includes coastal tributaries extending into Lane County is not included in the planning area. Appendix D provides an ecological snapshot summary of each of these subbasins.

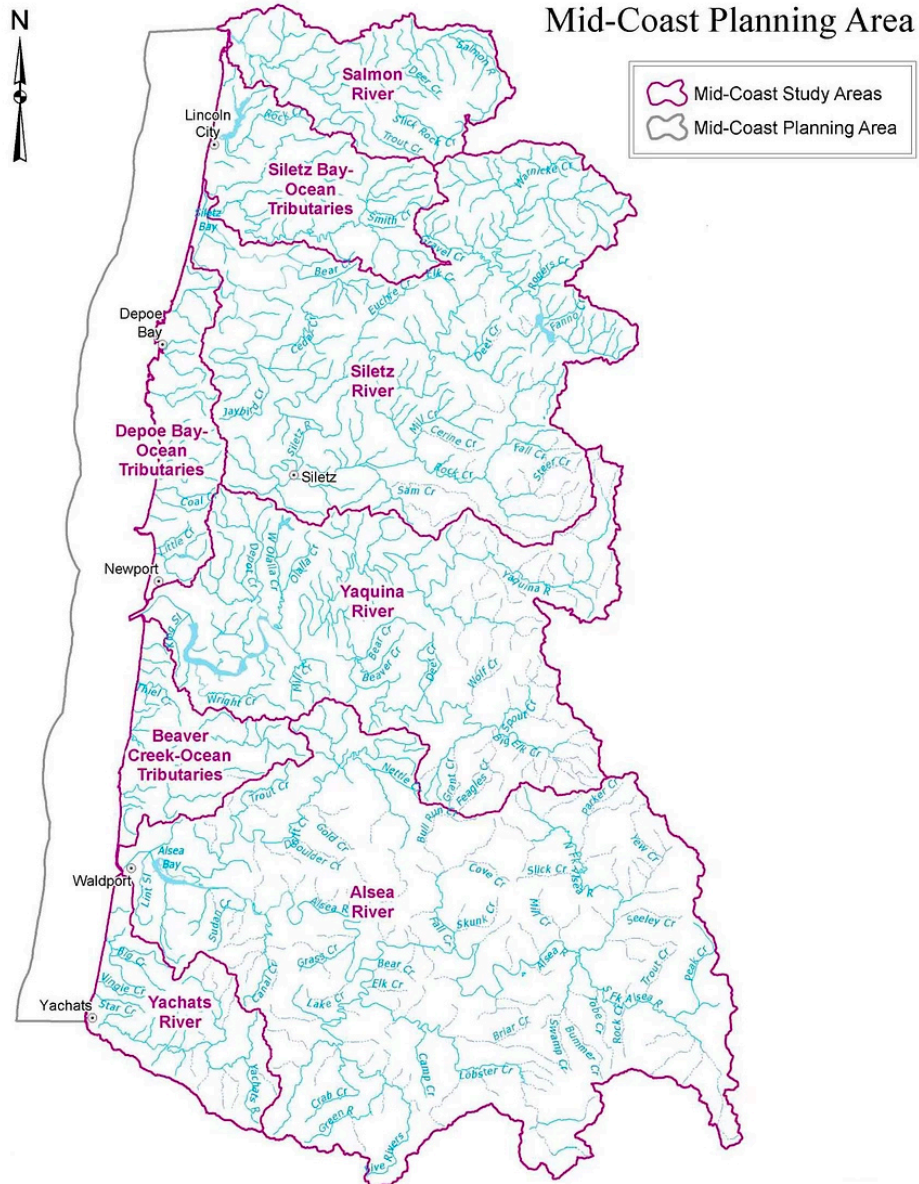


Figure 2. Subbasins comprising the Mid-Coast Planning Area.



## Guiding Principles

The Partnership followed the guiding principles in the Integrated Water Resources Strategy and also identified the following key values to guide how its members would work together as a partnership to achieve goals.

- **Partnership.** We recognize different perspectives and seek common ground to develop strategies that meet our collective needs.
- **Transparency.** We create an inclusive process to openly share information and interests, invite curiosity, and encourage dialogue.
- **Innovation.** We bring our best ideas and information to the table and explore innovative, out-of-the-box solutions.
- **Commitment.** We act in good faith to support the success of the Partnership in developing strategies that are in the best interests of the region.
- **Flexibility.** We are open to new ideas and approaches that will adapt our process or approach to fit the needs of the Partners.
- **Action.** We seek practical near-term actions as well as longer term strategies consistent with our goals.
- **Clarity.** We commit to expressing all of our findings in the simplest and clearest form possible.

Figure 3 illustrates some of the common elements of a successful strategic planning process.



Figure 3. Word graphic illustrating the elements of a successful planning process based on sound guidance principles.

## How this plan intersects with other regional planning efforts

This action plan is intended to achieve water resource protection objectives critical to the watersheds of the Mid-Coast as well as the people who live, work, and recreate in the Mid-Coast. It is also intended to supplement, complement, and support numerous other planning efforts currently underway in the region, especially those that address water issues foundational to the Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership (see Appendix E for a crosswalk of these efforts with this plan) (Figure 4). These regional planning efforts include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **[Final Endangered Species Act Recovery Plan for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon \(2016\)](#)** (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)<sup>2</sup>. The goal of this plan is to improve the viability of Oregon Coast Coho, and the ecosystems upon which it depends, to the point that they no longer require Endangered Species Action protection. The recovery direction for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon is to protect and restore the freshwater and estuarine rearing habitats that support juvenile survival and overall productivity.
- **[Lincoln County Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan \(2015, revised 2017\)](#)**<sup>3</sup>. This plan describes priority natural hazards of concern to the Mid-Coast region, including coastal erosion, drought, earthquakes, floods, landslides, tsunamis, wildfire, windstorms, and winter ice. Although there is no direct relationship to the actions within the Mid-Coast Water Planning Partnership Water Action Plan, any efforts that reconnect floodplains, restore stream flow, and restore riparian areas will enhance resilience of the Mid-Coast region to climate change stressors and several natural hazards. In addition, three actions within this plan have a nexus with natural hazards.
- **[Lincoln County Climate Action Plan \(2020\)](#)**. This plan emphasizes water supply resiliency measures that reduce water use by developing focused, interrelated water conservation measures, regulations, education, and incentives.
- **[Oregon Coast Coho Conservation Plan for the State of Oregon \(2007\)](#)**. This plan is intended to conserve and enhance Oregon Coast Coho and other native fish and wildlife species through on-the-ground, non-regulatory work by community-based entities and individuals.
- **[Oregon Coast Coho Business Plan \(Siletz; ongoing\)](#)**. This plan intends to conserve Oregon Coast Coho by working with local communities for voluntary habitat protection and restoration projects that will help recover threatened and endangered coho populations.

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<sup>2</sup> NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service). 2016. Recovery Plan for Oregon Coast Coho Salmon Evolutionarily Significant Unit. National Marine Fisheries Service, West Coast Region, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.co.lincoln.or.us/planning/page/natural-hazards-mitigation-plan>

- **Coastal Multispecies Conservation and Management Plan.** This plan describes the fish management needs for the conservation and use of anadromous salmonids along much of the Oregon coast.
- [Lincoln County Comprehensive Land Use Plan.](#)
- **Community Water System Plans (including Water System Master Plans, Capital Improvement Plans, Water Management and Conservation Plans, Emergency Response Plans).**
- [Oregon Department of Agriculture Water Quality Management Plan.](#) The Oregon Legislature passed the Agricultural Water Quality Management Act in 1993, which requires the Oregon Department of Agriculture to prevent and control water pollution from agricultural activities. ODA worked with local advisory committees to develop Water Quality Management Plans and Rules throughout the state.
- **Oregon’s Nonpoint Source Program Plan** (2014): Oregon’s Nonpoint Source pollution control and drinking water protection programs are based on a wide range of tools (planning, voluntary actions, prevention, restoration, etc.) including other government agencies’ programs to address water quality issues associated with multiple land uses or legacy conditions. These issues require the participation of multiple Sectors to protect or improve water quality and restore watershed ecological function (e.g., through WA Section 319 watershed-based plans).
- **Oregon’s Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Plan (CNPCP)**<sup>4,5</sup> Many Actions in this Plan support achieving the objectives of Oregon’s CNPCP, including implementation of several “management measures” that have not yet received federal approval.
- **Newport’s Long-Range Water Supply Report** (2001).
- **Rocky Creek Regional Water Supply Project** (2001).
- **Rocky Creek Report** (1999).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/OCMP/Pages/Water-Quality.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/wq/programs/Pages/Nonpoint.aspx>

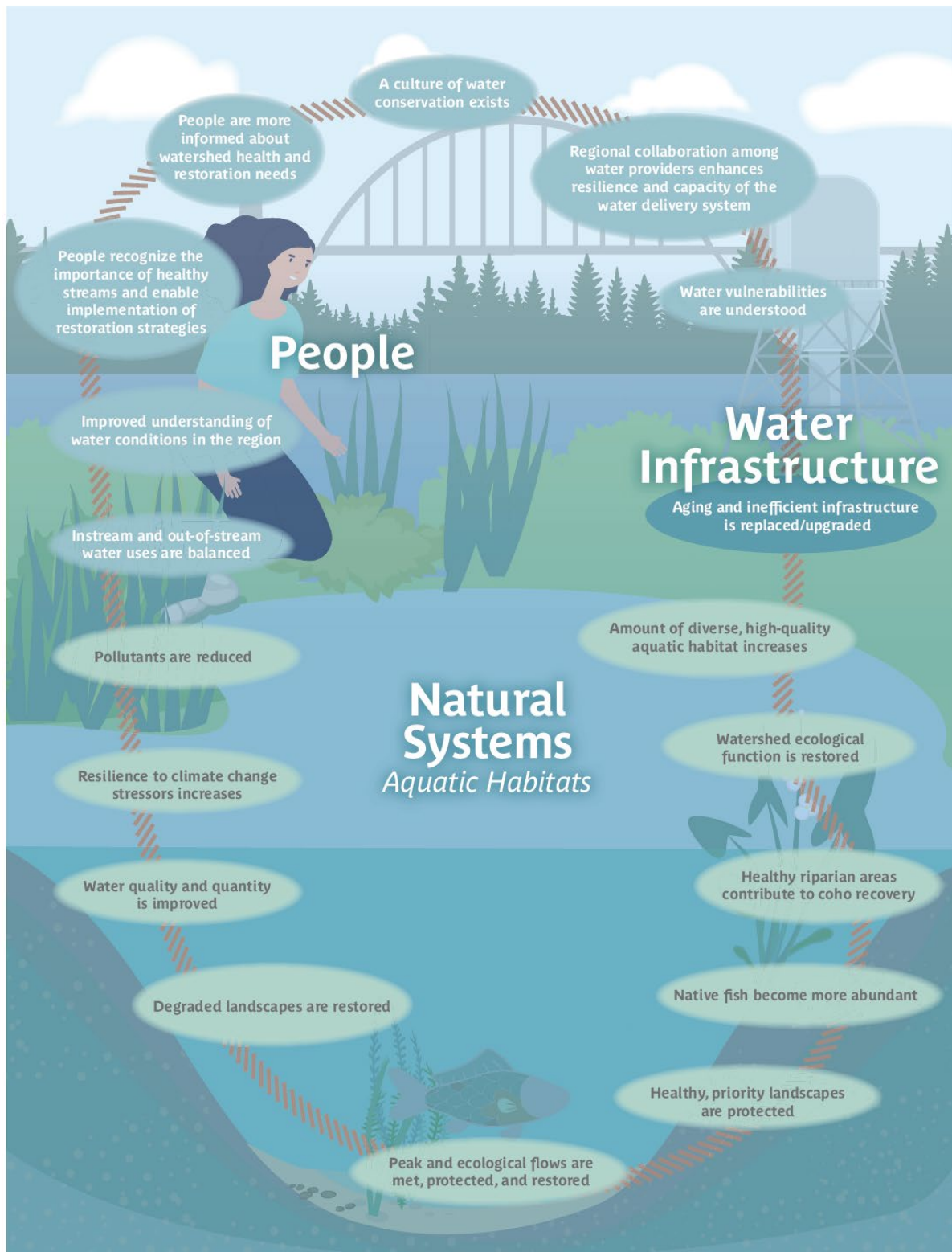


Figure 4. Graphic illustrating key outcomes of the Oregon Mid-Coast Water Action Plan and the interconnectedness of people, water infrastructure, and natural systems.

## Perceptions and Values of Mid-Coast Regional Stakeholders

During 2018, Oregon's Kitchen Table, a program of the National Policy Consensus Center in the College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University, engaged 680 people that frequently visit, or work, live, or own a business in the Mid-Coast in a project to better understand Mid-Coast Basin perceptions and values. Participants were asked about their knowledge and values, interests, or concerns, about the future of water in the region, and tradeoffs to consider as the MCWPP develops strategies to address key water issues and priorities ([Oregon's Kitchen Table 2019](#)). Engagement strategies consisted of an online and a paper-based survey (in both Spanish and English), as well as direct mailings to Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians households. A series of listening sessions were held with non-English speakers (both Spanish and Mam). A total of 505 people completed the online survey, 112 responded using the paper survey, 89% of participants self-identified as English speaking, and 11% self-identified as Spanish speaking. A total of 38 individuals identifying as members of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians participated in the survey.

The following commonly held values and beliefs were derived across all engagement strategies (Figure 5):

- The majority of participants listed health as the issue they think about either most, or next to most. A total of 43% of participants listed water as the issue they think about most, or next to most, and 41% listed environment or ecology. The other issues lagged behind those three.
- Most participants obtain their water from either a city or a water district.
- A total of 95% of participants use water for personal or home use (such as drinking, cleaning, and more).
- A total of 78% of participants indicated that they enjoy water "in a scenic way," and 73% use it to grow food or plants. Far fewer participants reported that they use it for business or industrial use (13%).
- A majority (57 %) of participants said their water costs are "about right". About a third of participants believed that their water costs too much (26%), or far too much (7%).
- The people who responded to the survey frequently thought about water use across the region. More than 40% thought about water use most of the time, whereas 17% thought of it all of the time. By contrast, less than 10% of respondents thought about it rarely or never. A total of 44% of respondents knew nothing about the Partnership, or very little (32%) about it before the survey.
- If survey participants could give 100 gallons of water to various uses, they said they would give the most water (32.6 gallons) to residential water supply for year-round residents. Water for fish and wildlife was listed second (23.7 gallons). Water for tourist lodging and tourist attractions would receive 7.6 gallons.
- When asked about ensuring if there is enough water for people, business, and nature, the results were split across concern for household use, infrastructure, and fish and wildlife. A

total of 28% of respondents reported that their primary concern is making sure there is enough safe water to drink and use for cleaning, whereas 23% reported their greatest concern was making sure that the region’s water structures (pipes, pumps, etc.) are in good condition to withstand time and a major event, such as an earthquake or tsunami. A total of 22% said their greatest concern was making sure there is enough water to support fish and wildlife. Far fewer people (1%) are most concerned about having enough water to support business and industry. Likewise, very few (1%) feel the biggest concern is that the water be safe for recreation.

- When asked to evaluate ways to help ensure that there is enough water for all needs, participants assigned points to various solutions. Watershed restoration or protection (protecting or improving the forests and lands the region’s water flows through) received the most points (19.8 points out of 100 possible points). Water storage systems (such as reservoirs) received 18.3 points, and conservation received 16 points. Sharing water among communities received the fewest points (7.2 points).

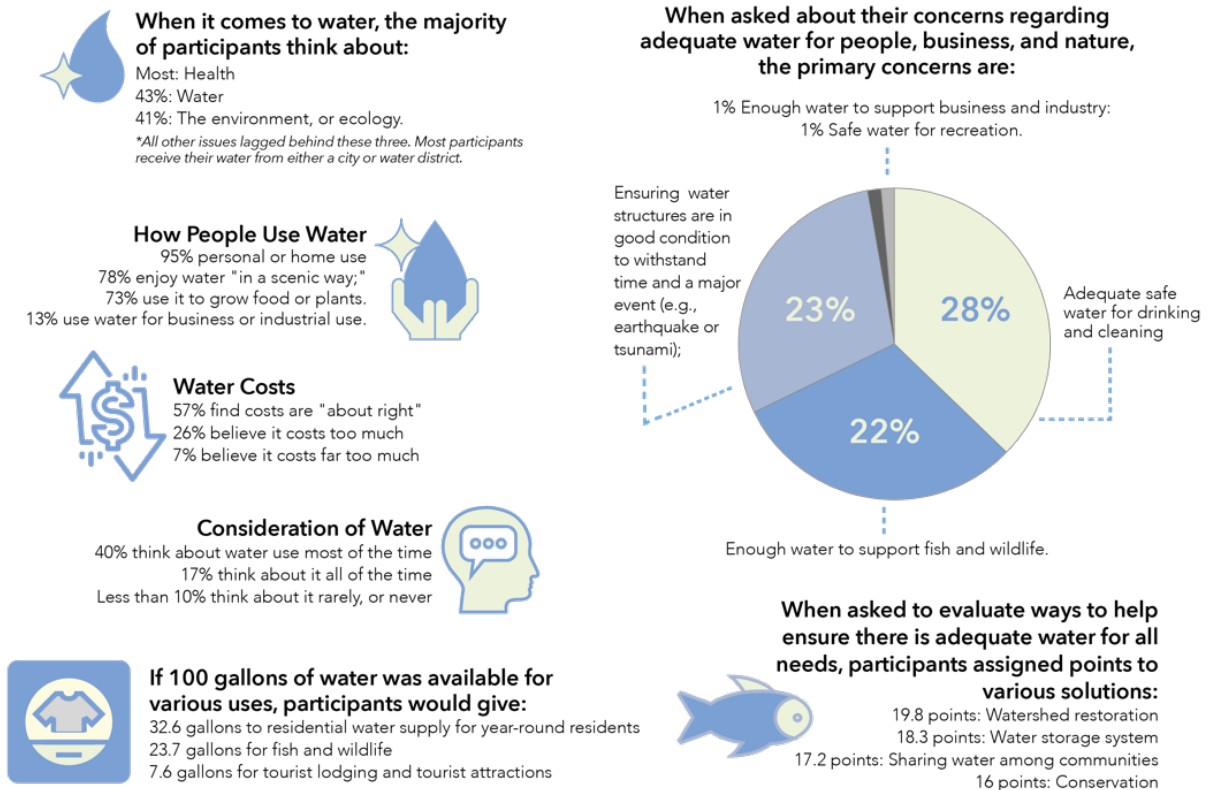


Figure 5. Key values and perspectives of Mid-Coast stakeholders in 2018 survey.