



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Deschutes County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Kyle Collins, Associate Planner

**DATE:** December 2, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Water Panel Discussions – Preparation for Comprehensive Plan Update

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On October 28, 2021, the Planning Commission (Commission) expressed interest in convening a water panel in preparation of the Comprehensive Plan Update (*Deschutes 2040*), which will be initiated in Spring 2022.

**I. PANEL RECOMMENDATION**

Staff acknowledges that these panel discussions are not intended to be extensive and exhaustive, but are intended to provide a framework for more detailed conversations during the formal Comprehensive Plan Update in 2022. An upcoming Water Panel will allow for an open-ended discussion regarding current water conditions, future trends and challenges, and stakeholder perspectives. To provide a manageable discussion framework, particularly regarding the fact that future water resource conversations will emerge during the Comprehensive Plan update, staff recommends the following format for the Commission's consideration:

**Themes**

Break the discussion topics into two major categories:

1. Current Water Resource Conditions and Impacts
2. User Group Perspectives and Challenges

Each of these discussion categories would allow the Commission to thoroughly understand the major water resource issues currently facing Central Oregon from a scientific, regulatory, and environmental perspective. It would also enable various user groups to provide more nuanced perspectives through ground-level details of how water resources are affecting the region and how the Comprehensive Plan update can address these issues in a 20-year policy document.

### Panel 1 - Current Water Resource Conditions and Impacts

- Kyle Gorman - Oregon Water Resource Department
- Bridget Moran - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Kate Fitzpatrick - Deschutes River Conservancy
- Stephen B. Gingerich, Ph.D - U.S. Geological Survey Oregon Water Science Center

### Panel 2 - User Group Perspectives and Challenges

- TBD, Deschutes Basin Board of Control
- Matt Cyrus – Deschutes County Farm Bureau
- Patrick Griffiths or Michael Buettner – City of Bend Utility Department

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Following the completion of a four-part Water Panel series in December 2018, the Planning Commission (Commission) directed staff to create a report to summarize the dialogue and key issues in water management as presented by the panelists.<sup>1</sup> The 2018 Water Panel consisted of multiple researchers, agency professionals, and interest groups with an interest in water use in Deschutes County and the larger region. The following is a list of the previous panelists and their respective affiliations:

- Kyle Gorman - Oregon Water Resource Department
- Stephen B. Gingerich, Ph.D - U.S. Geological Survey Oregon Water Science Center
- Bridget Moran - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Brett Hodgson - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Mark Buckley - ECONorthwest
- Mylen Bohle - Oregon State University Extension
- Leslie Clark - Central Oregon Irrigation District
- Margaret Matter - Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Bill Duerden - City of Redmond
- Craig Horell - Central Oregon Irrigation District
- Mike Taylor - Coalition for the Deschutes
- Adam Sussman - GSI Water Solutions

## **III. OCTOBER 28 / RECAP**

During the October 28 meeting, the Commission outlined numerous topics they would like addressed by a future Water Panel. The following is a list of possible discussion topics and themes referenced by Commissioners:

- Coordination roles for the Community Development Department (CDD) in addressing water resources and future development

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.deschutes.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community\\_development/page/780/water\\_panel\\_series\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.deschutes.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/780/water_panel_series_final_report.pdf)

- Over allocation of water resources from a state and local perspective
- Recent federal (National Resource Conservation Service) and state (Oregon Watershed Enhancement Fund) programs in relation to local irrigation districts
- Interplay between irrigation districts and residential water supplies
- The process for municipalities to acquire additional water rights
- Other jurisdictions which have explicitly utilized water resources in guiding population growth and development
- Introductory perspective on how the Deschutes Groundwater Mitigation Program operates
- Major water uses in the region and projections for those uses in the future
- Economic impacts on water consumption, specifically regarding utility providers and possible rate adjustments
- Interplay between water resources and broad conservation issues in Central Oregon

In addition to general discussion themes, Commissioners recommended certain persons and perspectives they would like included in the Water Panel. Those recommendations are as follows:

- The District 11 Watermaster
- A representative from the Oregon Water Resources Department
- A representative from the Tribal communities
- A private citizen that can speak to water resource issues (i.e. - private wells going dry, etc.)

Finally, the Commissioners broadly recommended choosing 5-6 discussion topics at maximum, then subsequently choosing specific questions they would like addressed. The Commissioners recommended having at least 3-4 panelists per discussion topic.

#### **IV. NEXT STEPS**

Staff will return on January 13, 2022 to discuss any final decisions made by the Commission regarding panel composition, discussion topics, and questions for consideration. The tentative dates for the two water panels are:

- February 24, 2022 - Current Water Resource Conditions and Impacts
- March 10, 2022 - User Group Perspectives and Challenges