



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Deschutes County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Kyle Collins, Associate Planner

**DATE:** October 21, 2021

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

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### I. BACKGROUND

Following the completion of a four-part Water Panel series in December 2018, the Planning Commission directed staff to create a report to summarize the dialogue and key issues in water management as presented by the panelists. A copy of the final 2018 Water Panel Series Report is provided as Attachment 1.

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

In preparation for the forthcoming Deschutes County Comprehensive Plan Update (*Deschutes 2040*), staff will begin preparations for a follow-up Water Panel series with the Planning Commission.

## **II. PURPOSE**

The forthcoming Water Panel is intended to supplement previous discussions and provide an initial conditions framework for the Comprehensive Plan Update. While the panel discussions are intended to provide guiding information for the Board of County Commissioners, the Planning Commission, and Deschutes County citizens, they are not intended to provide specific goals or policies.

At this stage, there are two major items for the Commission to discuss in regards to the new Water Panel:

- 1) Panel Composition
- 2) Major Topics/Themes and Discussion Format

### **Panel Composition**

In addition to the 2018 Water Panel participants, staff has compiled a list of possible panelists, provided as Attachment 2. The compiled list is based on the current members of the Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative (DBWC). The DBWC is a broad group of stakeholders brought together in 2020 to collaborate on critical water allocation and management issues in the Deschutes Basin, and develop strategies to meet stream flow, ecological, agricultural, and community needs for water. The DBWC was built on the momentum of the Upper Deschutes Basin Study Working Group, the Water Summit convened by the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the State of Oregon in the fall of 2018, as well as the legacy of the Deschutes Water Alliance.

The current DBWC members and the previous Water Panel members are not intended to be fully comprehensive of all possible perspectives or user groups related to water issues in the region. While these groups may provide an idea of who could be included in the forthcoming Water Panel, the Commission may also direct staff to reach out to parties or representatives not included in these groups.

### **Major Topics/Themes and Discussion Format**

In addition to the panel composition, the Commission will need to address an appropriate discussion format and general discussion topics. During the 2018 Water Panel discussions, the Commission elected to break the panel into representative groups across four separate topic areas:

- 1) Hydrology of the Upper Deschutes Basin
- 2) Environmental and Economic Impacts
- 3) Agricultural Water Consumption and Efficiency
- 4) Projections and Planning

Each of these discussion topics included 2-4 panelists based on professional background, training, or association with relevant stakeholders. The Commission may wish to continue the forthcoming Water Panel under a similar framework or provide alternative options. Possible alterations may include:

- Additional panel discussions on differing topics
- Larger/smaller panel groups for individual topics
- Additional discussion sessions on topics with special relevance or nuance

### **III. NEXT STEPS**

Staff will return in the coming weeks to discuss any final decisions made by the Commission regarding panel composition, panel discussion topics, and any other relevant items. At this stage, the Commission may direct staff to conduct additional research or outreach to provide background information for the Water Panel.

While no formal dates have been set regarding panel discussions, staff anticipates the first discussions will occur in late winter or early spring 2022. Ultimately, all items discussed by the Water Panel will be compiled into a final report and presented to the Planning Commission. This same report will guide a portion of the initial conditions summary included in the Comprehensive Plan Update.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1) 2018 Water Panel Series Final Report
- 2) Deschutes Basin Water Collaborative Membership