

City of Corvallis Salmon Response Plan

Chapter 9. Public Involvement Plan

Prepared for:

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DISCLAIMER

The authors have attempted to replace all references to Squaw Creek with the creek’s new name, Dunawi Creek. This includes replacing the creek’s full name as well as changing Squaw Creek Reach reference labels to indicate Dunawi Creek.

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CHAPTER 9. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Public involvement, participation and information have been an important element throughout the Corvallis ESA Salmon Response Plan project. Not only is it required under the ESA, but the City also has a strong commitment to and history of encouraging public involvement and education. This is reflected in Corvallis residents' and business owners' active participation in the many public opportunities (e.g., public meeting attendance, volunteering on various organization boards and committees, participating on advisory boards, etc.) to provide input on important City projects such as the ESA Salmon Response Plan project. The result is a City whose residents and business owners care about their community and its future, and demonstrate their commitment through active support.

The structure of the public involvement program for this project follows ESA requirements. Public input has been recognized as critical to the plan's success since the public will need to support or "buy-in" to the plan's implementation programs. As a consequence the professional consulting team included a public involvement/education specialist to craft the public involvement plan (PIP) and guide and facilitate the public involvement activities in order to maximize the input opportunities that the public would have.

What follows is a description of the public involvement/education program developed for the ESA Salmon Response Plan project. It describes the various techniques and activities implemented throughout the project.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Plan Structure and Objectives

A professional consulting firm, Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC, was hired to develop and guide the public involvement program (PIP). One of their first activities was to develop a PIP that outlined the overall public involvement objectives, strategies, and specific activities that would be implemented during the project. The PIP recognized Corvallis' unique qualities and stated that the public involvement strategy would have to be multi-faceted since "no single public involvement strategy will be effective in helping the City achieve its desired result", which was broad public support for the response plan effort.

The PIP recognized that public involvement and education would be a key element in the success of the project. The PIP stated, "Not only must the plan have a sound scientific basis for decision making, but the public also must be supportive of the programs to prevent salmon habitat degradation in Corvallis." Building on the requirements of the ESA and the City's historical support for public input, the public involvement strategy provided an outline of activities to educate, involve, inform, and seek contribution from the public throughout the project.

The PIP outlined a program with a variety of techniques to accomplish the City's objectives (see overall PIP and Second Phase PIP in Appendices 11 and 12). The PIP elements included educational activities such as fact sheets (see Appendix 13) and a project-related website. There was a two-way communication structure that included a series of public meetings/open houses, distribution of questionnaires and comment forms (see Appendices 14 and 15), and an e-mailing list. There also was a concerted effort to identify "hot button" issues early in the project through a series of stakeholders meetings and presentations to community groups such as the Corvallis Chamber of Commerce, large land owners (agricultural land owners, Corvallis School District), Mary's River Watershed Council and Oregon State University.

PIP Elements

The following is a description of the major PIP elements:

- **Designate an ESA contact for the City.** Greg Gescher, Corvallis Public Works Department Capital Planning and Projects Supervisor, was designated as the primary contact for citizen inquiries and involvement for the project. Mr. Gescher acted as the single contact person for questions regarding project progress. When needed he would contact other project team members to answer questions. His name and contact information (telephone and e-mail address) was included on all media releases, fact sheets and newsletters, and on the project website.
- **Establish an ESA response plan website.** A dedicated website was developed to provide Internet access to project information. The website was accessible directly or through a link from the City's own website. Information posted on the website included project background, schedules of public meetings and events, public meeting and activity results (summaries), project reports and technical memoranda. The website also included background information on the ESA, Section 4(d) Rules, listed Chinook salmon, and other relevant information. In addition, two public comment forms were posted on the website in order to collect public input from community members who were unable to attend the public meetings. The website was updated regularly to incorporate new information.
- **Publish articles in *The City* newsletter and other organizations' newsletters.** Articles were published in *The City* newsletter and other local publications on a regular basis to inform Corvallis citizens of the City's plans to prepare a response strategy, as well as to announce updates about the process. The newsletter was perhaps the most effective element in the media effort because it was sent to all residential households and businesses (more than 29,000 households in Corvallis). The first informational article was printed in the January 2001 newsletter. Updates were published at least quarterly and sometimes more frequently.

- **Involve other media.** Regular updates and advisories were sent to other media including the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, Oregon State University student newspaper (*The Barometer*), Mary's River Watershed Council newsletter, and Corvallis Chamber of Commerce newsletter.
- **Stakeholder involvement.** Stakeholders with specific issues regarding the ESA project were identified and contacted at the beginning of the project and periodically during the project. Early involvement of informed constituent groups through a series of meetings helped to advise and refine the project, and the approach to public involvement. Hot button issues were identified early in the project, which helped the project team structure its response. Both the land use/environmental and business groups recommended strong, early, and frequent public education and involvement in the process to obtain citizen input and avoid "surprises". Both groups offered to co-sponsor events, help distribute information about the process, and encourage the active involvement of their members. Stakeholders were again contacted early in Phase II of the project, and a series of meetings were held to provide them with an update on the Phase I findings and to identify any additional project issues or concerns.
- **Public meetings and events.** Four public meetings/open houses were held over the life of the project; on May 29, 2001; February 21, 2002; November 19, 2002; and June 4, 2003. The structure of these events allowed the public to view progress and talk with the project team members in an informal format. Maps, graphs and photographs were displayed. Project team members were available to explain the work and answer questions. Handouts that attendees could take with them also were available. These events included formal presentations, question and answer periods, and "table discussions" where those attending were able to address specific topics and the project team obtained public response and input. Comment forms were always available for the public to provide additional written information. Summaries of all public meetings/open houses, along with photographs and handouts, were posted on the project website.
- **Exhibits at summer affairs and events.** In order to disseminate information about the project and to provide general information on the ESA and how citizens can be involved, the project team attended City summer affairs and events, provided information tables, distributed fact sheets and answered questions. The events attended by the project team included DaVinci Days and the County Fair.

Phase II Public Involvement Plan Modifications

Prior to initiation of Phase II of the project (preparation of the solution program and report preparation), the project team reviewed the PIP and accomplishments to date with the purpose of identifying any modifications or changes in the program to make the PIP more effective. Several changes were identified and are described below.

- **Comment forms.** While comment forms had been used extensively at the public meetings/open houses, and distributed to the Chamber of Commerce and Environmental Center for distribution to the public, there was a concern that this distribution was not broad enough. It was decided that comments forms should be posted on the project website as another source for public input. Comment forms were posted to the website twice: immediately after the November 19, 2002 and June 4, 2003 public meetings/open houses.
- **Solution Options.** The project team recognized that the solution options to be developed in Phase II would be complex and not easily understood by the public, especially in their technical form. Since public input on the solution options would be very important, it was decided that non-technical versions would be prepared for public review. These versions would incorporate all the information about the solution options, but would limit the amount of technical language so the public would be more likely to understand the options.
- **PowerPoint Presentations.** Presentations at the public meetings during Phase II usually made heavy use of flip charts. The flip charts could not easily be posted on the website. It was decided that presentations at public meetings would be prepared and presented using Microsoft PowerPoint software. Such presentations could then easily be posted on the website as part of the meeting summary materials.

Public Involvement Activities

The following is a table (Table 6) of key public involvement activities during the project.

Table 6. Key Public Involvement Dates and Activities

Date	Activity Type	Description
October 2000	Stakeholder Meetings	Two meetings held over two days to elicit project “hot button” issues and concern. Recorded comments, which were used to help modify the public involvement strategy.
January 2001	<i>The City</i> Newsletter Article	Article describing ESA project and project schedule
January 2001	Launch Website	A project-related website was developed to provide 24-hour access to project information and related topics.
May 29, 2001	Open House/Public Meeting	First public meeting to present information on the project, work done to date, schedule, and related ESA information. Recorded public meeting comments
June 2001	<i>The City</i> Newsletter Article	Article updating the public on the ESA project.
Summer 2001	Displays at Local Public Events	Distributed information about the project at DaVinci Days and the County Fair.
February 21, 2002	Open House/Public Meeting	Second public meeting. Provided update on project. Displayed maps and provided information handouts. Discussed completion of Phase I of the project. Recorded public comments about the Phase I report and initial public input on solution options to be developed in Phase II.
Summer 2002	Displays at Local Public Events	Distributed information about the project at DaVinci Days and the County Fair.
September 2002	<i>The City</i> Newsletter Article	Article describing ESA Phase II project status and project schedule.

Table 6. Key Public Involvement Dates and Activities

Date	Activity Type	Description
October 2002	Stakeholder Meetings	Update stakeholders on project progress. Presented solution options and recorded their comments. Revised solution options based on comments.
October 2002	Project Fact Sheet	Prepared project Fact Sheet for distribution at public events and public meetings.
November 19, 2002	Open House/Public Meeting	Third public meeting. Provided update on project. Displayed maps, provided information handouts, and answered public questions. Presented solution options. Conducted table discussions to listen to public opinions and comments about the range of solution options to prevent further degradation of Chinook salmon habitat.
November 19 to December 9, 2002	Website Comment Form	Posted online interactive comment form on project website so public could submit comments and opinions on the range of solution options.
January 2003	<i>The City</i> Newsletter Article	Article on project status and synopsis of November 19, 2002, public meeting.
May 2003	Media Release	News release announcing public meeting June 4, 2003. Sent release to local news media (Gazette-Times, OSU Barometer) and community and business organizations (e.g., Mary's River Watershed Council, Chamber of Commerce). Printed announcement in <i>The City</i> Newsletter.
June 4, 2003	Open House/Public Meeting	Fourth public meeting. Provided update on project. Displayed maps, provided information handouts, and answered public questions. Presented revised solution options along with costs. Conducted table discussions to gather opinions and comments about the revised solution options to prevent further degradation of Chinook salmon habitat.

Table 6. Key Public Involvement Dates and Activities

Date	Activity Type	Description
June 9 to July 9, 2003	Website Comment Form	Posted online, interactive comment form on project website so public could submit comments and opinions on the revised solution options.
June 26, 2003	Comment Form Announcement	Sent announcement to e-mail mailing list regarding availability of the website comment form. Encouraged recipients to fill out comment form and to forward announcement to other City residents. Forwarded copy of comment form to Mary's River Watershed Council so Council could e-mail copy of comment form to their membership.