

CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is an important component of a successful planning process. This chapter describes the public involvement process for the Stormwater Master Plan (SWMP). The objectives of the public involvement process are discussed, as are the use of public surveys, public meetings, and incorporation of public concerns into the evaluation criteria.

2.1 OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

The City of Corvallis' (City) goal was to begin public involvement in the first days of the project and continue through plan adoption and implementation. The City Council directed the Mayor to appoint the Stormwater Planning Committee (SWPC) to facilitate and guide the public process required for the SWMP. The SWPC was selected to represent a cross-section of stakeholders in Corvallis, including citizens-at-large, whose task was to provide input into the development of a master plan to address existing and potential future stormwater issues in Corvallis.

The City designated the SWPC to lead implementation of the public involvement plan. The SWPC listened to citizens, identified key public values to guide planning, contributed to the selection and design of communication tools, participated in public meetings, and weighed the results of citizen feedback. As part of this responsibility, the SWPC met approximately every other week throughout the length of the project.

2.2 RESULTS FROM THE SURVEYS

At the beginning of the project, a public involvement consultant conducted a telephone survey of Corvallis residents. The survey served to "provide guidance to the Stormwater Planning Committee around public opinion and identify public sentiment toward the management of stormwater in Corvallis." Its purpose was to solicit input from the broader community affected by stormwater planning who might not typically participate in a public process to voice opinions and concerns.

The telephone survey was conducted in late December 1997 and early January 1998. A total of 366 residents responded to the survey. The results are consolidated into four basic thoughts:

- While residents generally lacked knowledge of the specifics of their stormwater service, they recognized the importance of the public safety and environmental impacts of stormwater management.
- Development was not seen as necessarily negative, but was recognized as impacting stormwater issues.

- Due to its impacts, development should help finance improvements and enhancements to the City's stormwater system.
- Residents acknowledged that while system development charges should pay for upfront costs, they are willing to accept responsibility for ongoing maintenance costs.

Details of the telephone survey are in Appendix A.

In addition to the telephone survey, lengthier interviews were held with community leaders and key stakeholders. Fifty participants were asked to share their views related to stormwater issues, the nature and severity of flooding problems, causes and possible solutions to flooding, values and principles to guide decision making, costs, and means for citizen participation. Among the persons interviewed were representatives of Corvallis neighborhood associations, environmental/clean water advocates, developers and homebuilders, business community leaders and employers, regulatory/resource agency personnel, members of the City Council, and area residents and property owners in affected watersheds. The key points offered by the stakeholders are:

1. Flooding is not the main problem.
2. Solutions must be site-specific.
3. Multiple-benefit and "natural" solutions are preferred.
4. A basin-by-basin approach to stormwater planning is necessary.
5. Public agencies should set a good stewardship example.
6. Existing ratepayers and new development should equitably share costs of stormwater system improvements.
7. The best methods of public outreach target lay citizens.
8. Gaining broad-based citizen understanding of stormwater issues will require a long-term commitment to public education.
9. The stormwater master plan should provide solid guidance for managing stormwater while maintaining and enhancing livability.

Additional discussion of the stakeholder survey is in Chapter 5. The full results are included in Appendix A.

2.3 PUBLIC MEETING FEEDBACK

A number of public meetings were held during the course of the project to distribute information about watershed planning efforts and to solicit input. A public project kickoff meeting was held on May 28, 1998. A subsequent public meeting on July 7, 1998, centered on identifying public values and, on December 3, 1998, a third public meeting was held to finalize public values and develop evaluation criteria.

Following the general public meetings, additional public meetings were held for each group of watersheds in the UGB. Two meetings were held for each group at a location within one of the watersheds to solicit input from local residents and interested citizens about problems, concerns, and their visions for the future. Preliminary results were also shared with the public at these meetings. Table 2-1 lists the watershed meeting dates.

Table 2-1. Public Meetings for Watershed Groups

Watershed Group	First meeting	Second meeting
Dixon Creek	March 30, 1999	April 6, 1999
Squaw Creek	March 30, 1999	April 8, 1999
Jackson Creek, Frazier Creek, Village Green Creek, Sequoia Creek, & Garfield Drainage	June 15, 1999	July 20, 1999
Oak Creek, Marys River, & South Corvallis	June 19, 1999	September 30, 1999

Feedback from the public varied from general comments about the watershed planning process to specific comments about local problems. The comments were recorded at each meeting and incorporated into the appropriate chapters of the SWMP. Each watershed chapter (chapters 6 through 13) lists the general public remarks pertinent to that watershed, and lists site-specific remarks in the relevant stream reach section. Public remarks were minimally edited to preserve the context. All of the remarks recorded in the public meetings listed in Table 2-1 are in Appendix A.

Public comments were used in several ways during the course of this project. The comments served to alert the project team to problems and concerns that may not have shown up in City staff reports, field investigations, or modeling; they confirmed problems and concerns noted by the other sources; and they helped formulate the public's vision for the future, which influenced the choice of alternatives for each watershed.

2.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The SWPC identified the evaluation criteria to be used in the formulation of the SWMP based on important issues expressed by members of the public. Participants reviewed the draft criteria during public meetings before it was finalized. The final criteria for the master planning process are:

- Maintains and accommodates natural hydrological processes.
- Protects and improves water quality.
- Controls unwanted erosion.
- Protects and restores natural resources and ecosystem functions.
- Meets or exceeds current regulations and anticipated future regulations.

- Ensures that cost considerations are inclusive.
- Addresses maintenance requirements and allows for maintenance access.
- Incorporates community awareness and information exchange.
- Addresses cumulative impacts and off-site impacts.
- Is designed and managed to avoid public health and safety hazards.
- Incorporates community amenities.
- Explores and uses innovative and low-technology approaches.
- Implements urban and rural land use objectives.

The final criteria were presented to the public in the Stormwater Alternatives Workshop on March 16, 2000. At the workshop, the public worked in small groups to rank the importance of the evaluation criteria. The results were used to recommend changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan and to help formulate appropriate projects and activities for each of the watersheds. Further explanation of the criteria is in Appendix A.

2.5 PUBLIC MEETINGS TO REVIEW THE DRAFT PLAN

The SWPC, in conjunction with the City Council Urban Services Committee, hosted two public meetings on August 14 and August 16, 2001, to collect comments on a complete draft of the SWMP. Before final adoption, the Corvallis Planning Commission and the City Council conducted public hearings to consider public comments relevant to the Plan.