

Public Participation

5.1 Introduction

For more than a decade, the City of Portland has been implementing a comprehensive public involvement program to educate, reach, and involve citizens in the issues, management solutions, and costs of reducing combined sewer overflows to the Willamette River and its tributaries (City of Portland December, 1994). The public participation efforts have enabled BES to reach and inform a substantial number of residents and stakeholders about virtually every element of potential Innovative Wet Weather Program projects. This chapter describes current and future public education and involvement for the Innovative Wet Weather Program.

5.2 Environmental Education

Numerous means of informing the public about Portland's CSO situation have been employed by the City. Some of them are:

- Media coverage – briefings, events, advisories and news releases, media inquiry and response, media monitoring
- Speakers Bureau – presentations to at least 73 neighborhood organizations, 5 regional neighborhood groups, and 38 civic/business/interest groups, some more than once
- *Clean River Review Newsletter* – general CSO information mailed to nearly 10,000 addresses
- *CSO Update Newsletter* – technical periodical mailed to more than 1,000 individuals and groups
- Direct mailers – multiple informational publications mailed to all 282,000 Portland postal customers
- Billing inserts – information about CSOs reached about 120,000 water/sewer customers
- CSO videotape – more than 100 copies distributed and used in classroom presentations
- *Combined Sewer Overflows, Issues and Choices Booklet* – information about alternatives for dealing with CSOs; 50,000 copies distributed mostly to neighborhood associations
- *Classroom and field education programs* – focused on watershed health, CSOs, Stormwater, and water quality issued. Specific field programs include Green Solutions tours of innovative stormwater management techniques and boat tours focusing on CSOs and the Willamette River.
- *School Projects* – naturescaping, downspout disconnections, bioswales, riparian restoration. Classroom and field education programs for K-12 students on watershed health, CSOs, Stormwater, and water quality issued. Specific field programs include Green Solutions tours of innovative stormwater management techniques and boat tours focusing on CSOs and the Willamette River.

- Commissioned Assembly Program – including plays, storytelling and music about Clean Rivers targeted toward school children
- *Clean River Quest* – educational computer software about water pollution in Portland shown to hundreds of adults and school children
- *Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) CSO Exhibit*

5.3 Public Involvement

In addition to public education, a substantial effort has been made to involve the public in activities relating to reducing CSOs. Several examples illustrate the effort that has been made:

- Public meetings – dozens of well-advertised opportunities to testify before citizen committees and the City Council
- Creative Alternatives Workshop – engaged a wide range of stakeholders in discussions about CSO abatement alternatives
- Clean River Funding Task Force – recommended policies and principles governing the allocation of CSO program costs
- Clean River Committee – appointed a range of stakeholders to look at technical and funding options for reducing CSOs
- Clean River Confluence – interactive conference addressing water quality standards, stormwater pollution, and CSOs
- Design charrettes – work sessions involving design and planning professionals in sewer separation projects, etc. (for example, the Tanner Creek stream diversion project)
- Community leader interviews – interviews of more than 70 civic leaders and stakeholders about CSOs. This is an ongoing process.
- General public telephone survey – a poll to determine the public's understanding of CSOs and their effect on water quality
- Focus groups – solicited views from a cross section of Portland residents about CSOs and water quality

5.4 Public Scoping

From the public participation efforts, the City has learned about public issues and concerns for the CSOs in general and IWWP projects in particular (City of Portland, December 1994). Some of the major and recurring themes are as follows:

- Improve water quality as a high public priority
- Prevent CSOs from entering the rivers through a process that fosters community support and recognizes financial constraints
- Increase emphasis on stormwater runoff reduction incentives for residences and businesses

- Approach the planning and implementation at the neighborhood level, subbasin by subbasin
- Seek opportunities for multiple benefits in all CSO program alternatives
- Demonstrate the City's leadership in enhancing and preserving the entire Willamette River
- Spread the program costs equitably
- Continuing efforts to inform and involve citizens in decision-making processes

5.5 Project Implementation

Public education and involvement in IWWP projects will continue during future implementation phases. Future public participation will target the groups most affected by the individual IWWP projects and will include adjacent property owners who could be affected by projects involving construction.

Public involvement activities for projects will focus on ways to include stakeholders in the design process, find additional community benefits that may arise from a particular project, and mitigate construction impacts on local residents and businesses. Members of the community will work directly with the BES design teams. BES will continue to work with affected groups to find additional community benefits that can come from construction and ways to mitigate any negative impacts of construction. An example is the ongoing public participation effort for the IWWP Tanner Creek stream diversion project (City of Portland, May 1997).

For each individual project or group of similar projects, BES will develop a public involvement plan. Typically, public involvement plans will outline the following:

- Goals, objectives, and timelines of the individual projects
- Message and target audiences
- Public meetings to inform individual neighborhoods
- Communication tools necessary to convey the message
- Tools necessary for effective public participation, including citizen committees where appropriate
- Coordination with other activities that could be affected by the project
- Use of program identity in all informational materials
- Media relations
- Advertising

People who are interested in improving water quality in Portland will have opportunities to get involved with projects, not only with planning and design but with construction, operation, and monitoring (this could include students, teachers, and parents at school sites).

BES will notify EPA in advance of conducting these public involvement activities for each of the IWWP projects and give EPA the opportunity to provide input regarding the level of community

outreach efforts. EPA's comments will be integrated into each of the final IWWP project public involvement plans.

5.6 NEPA Process

In addition to ongoing public involvement in the IWWP projects, the City is planning to further inform the public about the program by making this environmental assessment available for review and comment. Depending on the nature of the feedback it receives, the City will consider conducting a public hearing to provide yet another opportunity to involve the public.