

# Public Involvement Policy

Environmental Services  
City of Portland  
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[www.cleanrivers-pdx.org](http://www.cleanrivers-pdx.org)

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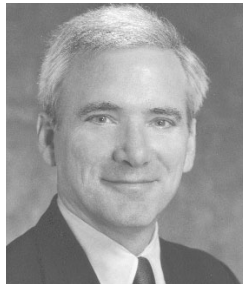
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ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
CITY OF PORTLAND  
working for clean rivers

## Introduction from the Director

The Bureau of Environmental Services is working hard to improve the health of our urban watersheds. Over the next decade we will control combined sewer overflows, restore endangered fish habitat, and reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that carries pollutants into our rivers and streams.



These important water quality investments will increase sewer rates, and their construction will have broad impacts on the community. Engaging the citizens of Portland to actively participate in making decisions about these projects is critical to their success. Our public involvement activities must provide opportunities for such active citizenship.

Citizenship, in its deepest sense, is work, whether paid or unpaid, that has public meaning and lasting public impact. The Bureau recognizes that citizenship requires skills that are not inherent, such as issue evaluation, strategic thinking, public communication, and conflict resolution. We will provide opportunities for enhancing those skills for community members who want to become involved.

This Public Involvement Guidebook is intended to be a helpful tool for program and project managers. It outlines the basic principles and important elements to be considered in developing public involvement plans, which are an early and integral aspect of any bureau activity. Successful completion of construction projects in particular requires an ongoing commitment to public involvement.

In a broader context, public involvement can help put the "civil" back in civil service and bring citizens closer to their government. When citizens work together, they begin to see each other outside of the narrow categories of environmentalist, bureaucrat, customer, or neighborhood activist. Public involvement can, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, allow all of us to become "participants in the governance of affairs."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Marriott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "M".

Dean Marriott,  
Director, Environmental Services

## Public Involvement Policy

The Bureau of Environmental Services is committed to meaningful public involvement as an essential element of all bureau programs and projects. Public involvement provides opportunities for Portland's citizens to participate in decision making, take part in stewardship activities, and help build sustainable community partnerships.

## Principles For Success

To provide consistent, comprehensive public involvement services and management, Bureau staff will incorporate the following principles into their activities as appropriate:

- Public involvement is an early and integral part of the concept, design, and implementation of programs and projects.
- The decision-making process requires a wide range of opportunities for citizen participation.
- Information about programs and projects, including their potential impacts on the community, will be accurate, timely, and complete.
- Partnerships with community organizations encourage and facilitate public involvement.
- Other City staff and public agencies should be part of the public involvement partnership.
- Opportunities to foster stewardship of the Willamette River and our other urban watersheds are important.
- Citizens and community groups may need training in the skills needed for effective public involvement.
- Classes, workshops, and site visits provide opportunities for learning about watershed health.
- The public involvement process requires monitoring and evaluation, and can be modified to adapt to new or changing circumstances.

## The Value of Public Involvement

Public involvement is integral to the success of the Bureau's activities. It results in programs and projects that are responsive and acceptable to the community and that meet regulatory or environmental requirements. Public involvement provides the following demonstrated benefits:

- Public issues and concerns are identified and addressed early in the process.
- Conflict is managed and issues are resolved.
- Activities are consistent and coordinated.
- Two-way communication with the community is enhanced.
- Public understanding and support for Bureau projects and programs is increased.
- Projects and programs are completed on time and within budget.
- Project and program outcomes are strengthened.
- Citizen knowledge and stewardship of Portland's watersheds are improved.

## Public Involvement Services

The Bureau's watershed program coordinators develop and manage the public involvement elements of all watershed programs and projects, both capital and operating. The watershed program coordinators:

- Work with managers to develop public involvement plans.
- Provide expertise on public involvement methodology and techniques.
- Oversee implementation of public involvement activities.
- Act as the liaison between the community and the Bureau.
- Coordinate public involvement activities with other agencies.
- Provide facilitation services for internal project and program forums.

## Approaches and Techniques

Public involvement activities are tailored to the particular circumstances and needs of each program or project. Watershed program coordinators work with project managers to identify stakeholders, issues, and public involvement goals, and they design a plan that specifies what, how, and when activities will be conducted.

Commonly used approaches and techniques include the following:

### **Stakeholder Databases**

Databases with people who may be interested in or affected by the program or project is developed and continually updated. The stakeholders may include business and residential property owners; neighborhood, business, and tenant associations; and other groups within the program or project area. The database is used to distribute information, solicit participation, and track contacts.

### **Informational Materials**

Information materials about the program or project are developed and distributed, both through traditional mailings and electronically when appropriate. For example, a fact sheet for a construction project could be both printed and distributed by email, and it would include:

- Project purpose overview.
- Map of the project area and the alignment or construction route.
- Project timeline and scheduled activities.
- Bureau's commitment to mitigate construction impacts and, when possible, provide community enhancements.
- Telephone number and email of primary contact person.
- Announcement of project meetings and activities.
- Feedback form for public to express ideas and concerns, if appropriate.

## **Community Presentations**

Presentations to stakeholder groups and open house meetings provide opportunities for citizens to review programs and projects and communicate directly to bureau staff. When possible, meetings are co-sponsored by existing organizations. The information covered in presentations and meetings might include:

- Project purpose, overview, and timeline.
- Design and construction issues.
- Construction routes and traffic plans.
- Mitigation measures to address project impacts.
- Community concerns and ideas.

## **Site Visits**

Site visits help maintain ongoing, face-to-face contact with businesses and residents affected by the project (e.g., along construction routes). The purpose of these visits is to discuss the project and identify and resolve design and construction issues, such as access, parking, construction hours and impacts, and traffic management. Taking community members to the site where the work will be done provides another opportunity to discuss concerns, issues, and opportunities.

## **Advisory Committees & Task Groups**

Advisory Committees help make decisions about policy issues for bureau programs such as CSO and stormwater. Task Groups provide direct input and guidance for a specific project.

## **Focus Groups**

Focus groups provide direct feedback about program presentation and information about public values and needs.

## **Educational Workshops**

Educational opportunities, free and open to the public, are offered to broaden the knowledge base of the community about watershed health and stewardship opportunities. Examples are Naturescaping for Clean Rivers, Streamside Workshops, Slough 101, Culvert Connections, and Johnson Creek Watershed Summit. These opportunities are enhanced if they are co-sponsored by local community organizations.

## **Evaluation**

As programs and projects progress, especially those that are long term, there are benefits to evaluating public involvement services. Evaluations are specifically designed for particular activities and include surveys, focus groups, and feedback forms.

**For information about public involvement activities contact the appropriate watershed coordinator listed below:**

**Columbia Slough:** 503-823-7268

**Fanno and Tryon Creeks:** 503-823-7236

**Johnson Creek:** 503-823-5334

**Willamette River:** 503-823-7898

For additional information about Bureau Public Involvement services, contact Willamette River Section Manager at 503-823-5524.