

From Raindrops to Rivers: Nurturing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Pacific Northwest's Water Journey

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By the end of this presentation you will...

- ✓ Better understand DEI challenges specific to the Pacific Northwest
- ✓ Better understand challenges water utilities face in supporting their communities
- ✓ Better understand challenges communities face across the region when it comes to their access to safe drinking water
- ✓ Leave with some ideas to implement or investigate further
- ✓ Leave with a handful of resources

Agenda

- Introductions
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Water Industry
- Ratepayers in the PNW
- Utilities in the PNW
- Actions
 - From Owners/Utilities
 - From Consultants
- Open Discussion

Meet Your Speakers



Courtney Thomas, P.E., ENV SP (she/her)

Title: Engineering Manager

Years in Industry: 9

Favorite Projects:

- Coachella Valley AM Program
- WWSP RES_1.0



Cat Cecilio, E.I.T. (she/her)

Title: Project Engineer

Years in Industry: 3

Favorite Projects:

- Salem Lead & Copper Replacement
- Horizon Lateral

DEI in the Water Industry

How does DEI impact the Water Industry?



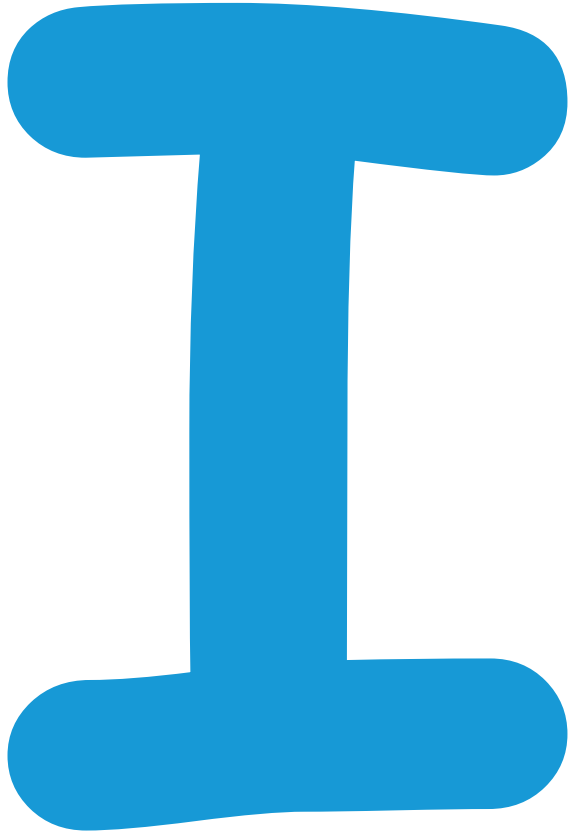
Diversity - What makes us unique. It's about respecting and valuing our differences whether they stem from race, ethnicity, sex, gender, gender identity, age, religion, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or other life experiences, and individual unique characteristics both seen and unseen.

How does DEI impact the Water Industry?



Equity - Provides everyone with fair treatment and an equal opportunity to thrive, while also identifying and eliminating barriers that limit the full potential of diverse individuals and groups.

How does DEI impact the Water Industry?



Inclusion - Occurs when people are welcomed, respected, supported, and valued, where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Socioeconomic status is a barrier to safe water access!

These barriers lead to challenges that include:

- contaminated water supplies
- housing with lead pipes
- other substandard plumbing issues
- unequal distribution of public drinking water

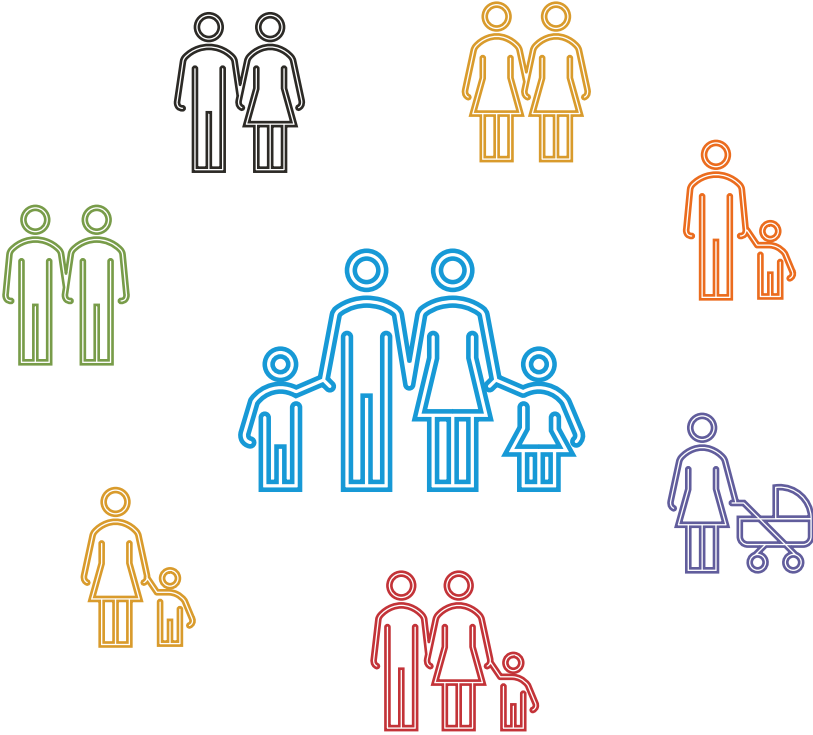


<https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/families2nd2e/chapter/10-5-access-to-water-and-sanitation/>

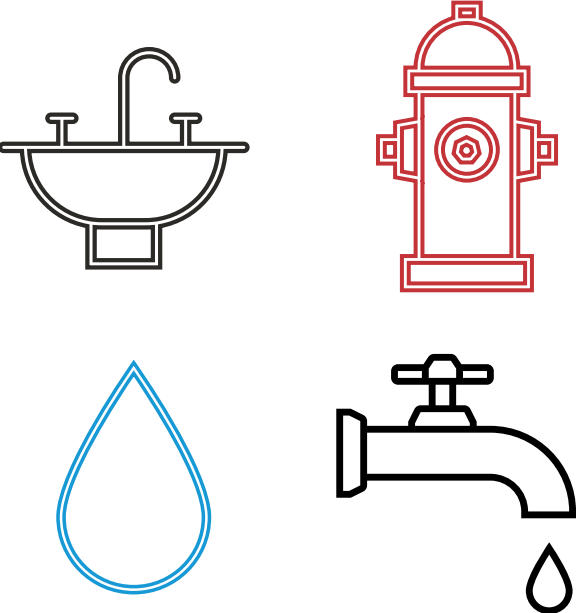
Equity focuses on removing these barriers to equality and they're constantly moving.

Two Sides to the Coin

Rate Payers



Water Suppliers/Utilities



Ratepayers in the PNW

Water Rates Across the PNW

Water Utility	Customers Served	Rate per CCF	Median Household Income
Seattle Public Utilities	1.5 million	\$5.76 ¹	\$102,486
Portland Water Bureau	1 million	\$7.00	\$74,243
City of Salem Public Works Department	192,000	\$3.02	\$63,453
Tacoma Public Utilities	194,000	\$2.575 ²	\$62,776
City of Boise Public Works Department	100,000	\$6.28	\$57,947
Nampa Public Works Department	25,000	\$3.71	\$57,466
Eugene Water & Electric Board	200,000	\$2.68	\$55,369
Spokane Water Department	200,000	\$2.56	\$53,925
Idaho Falls Power & Light	27,000	\$2.94	\$52,921

¹ Off-peak usage (Sept. 16 – May 15)

² Winter Rates – Inside City of Tacoma

Wealth Distribution Across the PNW

	Seattle	Portland	Tacoma	Boise	Eugene	Spokane
Lowest Quintile	\$19,358.00	\$16,125.00	\$16,472.00	\$21,848.00	\$11,081.00	\$16,516.00
Third Quintile	\$115,452.00	\$81,889.00	\$81,968.00	\$68,748.00	\$61,988.00	\$70,053.00
Highest Quintile	\$442,401.00	\$291,331.00	\$233,938.00	\$174,401.00	\$225,599.00	\$243,698.00

Why are they charged the same?

Income Driven Fixed Rates

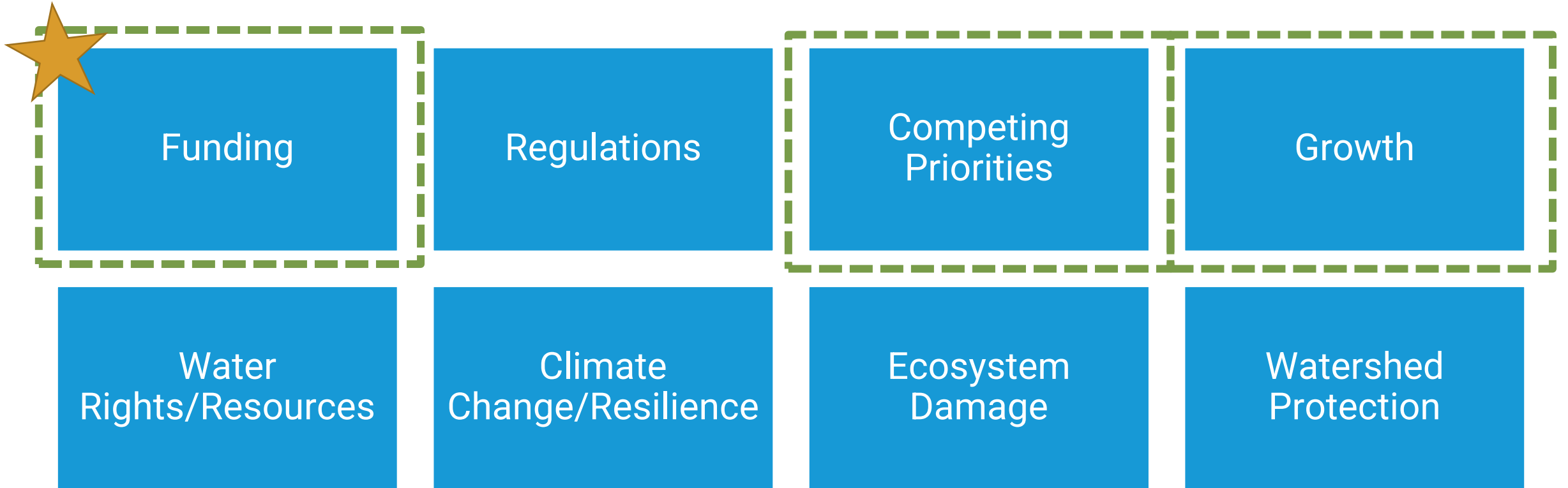
- California AB-205 – Energy
- Fixed charges based on minimum (3) income thresholds
 - July 1, 2024 deadline
- Fixed charges plus volumetric usage

Household Income	Proposed Fixed Charge (PG&E)
\$28,000 - \$69,000	\$30
\$69,000 - \$180,000	\$73
> \$180,000	\$92

- Water applications

Utilities in the PNW

Common Roadblocks for Utilities Serving their Communities



Resources for Getting More Funding

- Loans
- Grants
- Funds
- Varying requirements and stipulations
- Look for programs that impact multiple aspects of the environment
- Many compiled guides are already available →

2023

OREGON DRINKING WATER & WASTEWATER FUNDING AND RESOURCE GUIDE



Making Educated Planning Decisions for Larger Positive Impacts



Develop Prioritization Plans



Develop reports needed for
grant/loan applications



Work with partner agencies to
better the entire community

Actions... For Owners

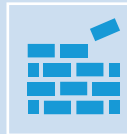
How can utilities help close the gap?



Research & Implement Income-Driven Utility Rate Programs



Increase Public Awareness of Utility Low Income Assistance Programs



Reduce Steps/Barriers to Low-Income Programs



Pursue ENVISION Awards

Actions... For Consultants

How can consultants and industry experts help close the gap?

Assist in Acquiring Funding

- Develop affordable hazard mitigation and resiliency plans

Provide Expertise & Guidance

- Develop Capacity, Management, Operations and Maintenance plans (CMOM)
- Develop prioritization plans and funding-required reports

Develop Sustainable Designs

- Support the ENVISION documentation process
- View projects holistically for the impacts to communities

Discussion



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