

2010 BES PUBLIC AWARENESS FOCUS GROUPS

Conducted for:



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
CITY OF PORTLAND
working for clean rivers

Data Collected
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Introduction

The City of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) operates the City's wastewater and stormwater utilities. Its mission is to protect public health, water quality, and the environment.

The Bureau is currently nearing the completion of the "Big Pipe" project, which is designed to reduce combined sewer overflows into the Willamette River by 94% when it is completed in 2011. This project is the largest capital improvement project in the City's history and has been the primary driver in a significant increase in sewer and stormwater rates over the last 20 years.

As BES nears the completion of the Big Pipe project, it wants to evaluate the current level of public awareness and understanding of the work it does for the City's residents and the public's recommendations regarding future priorities. As a result, BES contracted with Campbell DeLong Resources, Inc. (CDRI) to conduct a series of four focus groups with area ratepayers. This report contains the findings of those groups. It is divided into the following sections:

- ▶ **Executive Summary**, highlighting the key findings of the research.
- ▶ **Research Results**, outlining the findings from the research.
- ▶ **Conclusions and Recommendations**, providing the next steps we believe BES should take based on the research and our past experience.
- ▶ **Appendix**, containing a review of the methodology used to conduct the research, as well as a copy of the screening questionnaire used to recruit focus group participants, the discussion guide used to direct the groups, and handouts used during the groups.

If you have questions or comments about this research, contact [Martha DeLong](mailto:Martha.DeLong@cdri.com) at Campbell DeLong Resources, Inc. at (503) 221-2005 or Marthad@cdri.com.

Within BES, questions should be directed to [Megan Callahan](mailto:Megan.Callahan@portlandoregon.gov), Public Involvement & Community Relations Manager, at (503) 823-4759 or Megan.Callahan@portlandoregon.gov.

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Executive Summary

The following summarizes key points from the research. To understand the full depth of the research, however, the reader is urged to review the entire report.

METHODS

A set of four focus groups were conducted with City of Portland residents who live in households that pay their sewer and stormwater management bill. Two groups were held with residents who live on the west side of the Willamette River and two with residents who live on the east side of the Willamette River.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

1. Quotas were established and locations selected to ensure ratepayers from throughout Portland attended the groups. As a result, a wide range of ages and occupations are represented.

Environmental Issues Facing Portland

2. Improving water quality frequently is mentioned on an unaided basis as an environmental issue the City of Portland should be addressing in the next five to ten years.
3. When asked to rate nine environmental issues on how important it is for the City of Portland to address, improving water quality generates the highest average rating among westside and eastside ratepayers. Cleaning up the Superfund site's rating is in the middle and protecting endangered species is least important.

Awareness & Reputation of BES

4. Almost all believe either the City of Portland or the Water Bureau provides sewer and stormwater management services because they pay their bill to the City of Portland Water Bureau.
5. BES receives some praise for the Big Pipe project, downspout disconnection program, and bioswales.
6. Ratepayers say overflows into the Willamette, big bills, and poor communications are the downsides to BES.
7. Ratepayers frequently say using ratepayers' funds efficiently is the most important of BES's responsibilities.
8. Ratings for how well BES is meeting its responsibilities are relatively low, primarily because ratepayers frequently aren't sure what BES does.
9. Ratepayers say they have learned little about BES in the past year, but would like to know the results of BES's efforts to improving water quality and how individuals can help.

Perceptions of the Willamette River

10. Participants know watersheds are important, but have only a vague idea of what they are. Ratepayers are most likely to cite Johnson Creek as a local watershed.
11. Most believe there is a substantial decline in water quality in the Willamette as it flows through Portland and that there has been little change in water quality in the last five years.
12. While most have a general knowledge of the Big Pipe project, there is little awareness of when it will be completed or when it will have a positive impact on the Willamette.
13. DEQ's Willamette Water Quality Index is met with skepticism. Ratepayers will not believe the Willamette has "excellent" water quality until they feel comfortable swimming in it and eating fish caught in it.

Next Steps for BES

14. Ratepayers believe the City should regulate industry, finish the Big Pipe, and offer more incentives to individuals to make changes.
15. There is agreement that more public information and outreach would be beneficial.
16. The question of whether the City should "help" or should "require" property owners to clean up and restore contaminated sites is often difficult for ratepayers. Many say "it depends."

Superfund Site

17. Understanding of the Superfund site is typically superficial and ratepayers have little idea of what BES's role in the process should be.

Individual Action & Willingness to Pay for Cleaner Rivers & Streams

18. Participants appear to have gotten the message that individuals contribute to water pollution.
19. Sewer and stormwater services are somewhat lower in perceived value than other utilities except for cable.
20. Almost all participants are willing to pay more to improve water quality — but they want evidence of improvement.

KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Portland residents want improved water quality in area rivers and streams. They don't know if BES is making any progress in accomplishing this goal.**
2. **To attract residents' attention, keep communications simple and focused on what they want to know.**
3. **To change the skepticism that their dollars may not be well spent, focus communication on results, not tasks.**

More detailed Conclusions and Recommendations may be reviewed starting on page 35 of this report

Research Results

I. Participant Characteristics

PARTICIPANTS LIVE THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF PORTLAND.

A key objective of the focus group design was to ensure participants in the groups live throughout the city of Portland. To accomplish this, quotas were set to ensure representation from Southwest, Northwest, North, Northeast, and Southeast Portland. In addition, for the groups designated to be attended by eastside ratepayers, quotas were also set for east and west of 82nd Avenue.

In addition to setting quotas, the groups were held in three different locations in order to make it as easy as possible for ratepayers in different parts of the City to attend. Two groups were held at VuPoint, a focus group facility in Northwest Portland on the MAX line. All participants in these two groups are from either Southwest or Northwest Portland. Throughout the report, when the responses of “westside participants” or the “westside groups” are noted, we are referring to these two groups. The remaining two groups were held in two different locations on Portland’s eastside — one close-in eastside in the Multnomah County building right off the Hawthorne Bridge and the second in outer Southeast at the East Portland Community Center on SE 106th. Participants in these groups are identified in the report as “eastside participants” or “eastside groups.”

PARTICIPANTS REPRESENT A WIDE RANGE OF AGES AND OCCUPATIONS.

In addition to residing all over Portland, participants in the groups also represent a wide range of occupations. Participants included retired teachers and a retired Portland police officer, computer technicians, a researcher at OHSU, bike delivery person, delivery truck driver, several students, an accountant, a heavy equipment operator, a college professor and several secondary school teachers, several real estate professionals, and a community organizer. There were also several unemployed individuals.

Occupations did not vary substantially between the westside and inner eastside groups. However, the outer eastside group did have a higher concentration of unemployed individuals as well as individuals with more “blue collar” jobs.

II. Environmental Issues Facing Portland

RATEPAYERS FREQUENTLY CITE WATER QUALITY, PARTICULARLY THE WILLAMETTE RIVER, AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE THE CITY OF PORTLAND SHOULD BE ADDRESSING IN THE NEXT FIVE TO TEN YEARS.

To begin the groups, participants were asked to create a list of the most important environmental issues they believe the City of Portland should be addressing over the next five to ten years. While all groups had no problem creating a list of environmental problems facing the City of Portland, the lists are longer in the eastside groups than in the westside groups.

In all of the groups, water quality, and often specifically the Willamette River, are among the first issues mentioned. Participants in both of the eastside groups specifically say the City needs to “clean up the Willamette” and “deal with waste water.” A participant in the one of the westside groups noted that “you can’t swim in the Willamette, and we should be able to.” A few participants from the west and east sides note the need to “finish” the sewer pipe project.

In addition to water quality issues, participants identify the following as environmental issues the City should be addressing:

- ▶ **Recycling**, including increasing recycling rates and increasing the types of materials that can be recycled.
- ▶ **Transportation** related issues, including traffic control, alternative means of transportation, and “clean transportation.”
- ▶ **Population**-related issues, including over-population, growth, discouraging people from moving to Portland, the urban growth boundary, and urban infill.
- ▶ **Green spaces**, including parks and trees and preserving green spaces.
- ▶ **Energy**-related issues (eastside only), including alternative energy, weatherizing, solar and wind energy, and incentives for solar power.
- ▶ **Upgrading buildings** (outer eastside only) including green roofs and making buildings more energy efficient.

Other issues mentioned by only one participant include: helping people live more sustainable lifestyles, including growing their own food; upgrading infrastructure; improving drinking water; and reducing carbon footprint.

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY TOP RATED ENVIRONMENT ISSUE.

After providing their own ideas about the environmental issues they would like to see the City of Portland address in the next five to ten years, participants were asked to rate how important they believe it is for the City of Portland to address each of nine environmental issues during that time period. A 5-point scale was used, where a “1” was not important and a “5” was highly important.

The environmental issues participants rated included:

- ▶ Improving water quality in area rivers and streams
- ▶ Reducing solid waste that goes into landfills
- ▶ Promoting alternative forms of energy
- ▶ Preserving undeveloped and natural areas
- ▶ Improving air quality
- ▶ Cleaning up the Portland Harbor Superfund Site
- ▶ Promoting sustainable development and building practices
- ▶ Promoting alternative forms of transportation
- ▶ Protecting endangered species

The graphic on page 7 shows the average ratings for westside and eastside participants. Key findings on environmental issues that BES is involved in include:

- ▶ **Overall, eastside participants tended to rate all of the environmental issues as more important.** Different segments or types of individuals frequently are found to rate a list of issues, features, or characteristics higher or lower than another group. That is certainly the case in this situation, where the eastside participants consistently rated all of the environmental issues on the list higher in importance than did westside participants. This is in keeping with the fact that eastside participants generated a somewhat longer list of environmental issues they believe the City should be addressing.
- ▶ **Improving water quality in area rivers and streams receives the highest average rating from both west and eastside participants.** The average rating for westside participants is 4.4 and for eastside participants is 4.7.

When asked why improving water quality is so important, participants frequently talk about a personal experience with the Willamette River or display a personal attachment to the Willamette:

- ✓ “I kayak on the Willamette and there is a chemical smell. And the fish aren’t happy.”
- ✓ “Why does the Willamette have to be so bad?”
- ✓ “The Willamette is a great river, but you can’t take your kids to it. I was just in Michigan and I swam in Lake Michigan, but I would never swim in the Willamette.”

Some participants specifically worry about the fish in the Willamette:

- ✓ “The Willamette kills fish, especially salmon.”
- ✓ “You can’t eat the fish in the Willamette.”

A few eastside participants say improving water quality is important because the central role water plays in our lives:

- ✓ “Water is central to our lives, our quality of life.”
- ✓ “Water is a global issue.”
- ✓ “If we take care of the water, the water will take care of us.”

- ▶ **Eastside ratepayers place greater importance on cleaning up the Portland Harbor Superfund site.** It is important to note that *Cleaning up the Portland Harbor Superfund site* is the only environmental issue for which there is a significant number of “don’t know” responses. Six of 24 westside participants and 8 of 25 eastside participants indicate they don’t know how to rate the importance of this issue. Among westside participants only one other issue — promoting sustainable development and building practices — received any “don’t know” response (2 of 24). No other issue received “don’t know” responses from eastside participants.

When those who provided a rating were asked why their ratings for the Superfund site are somewhat lower, participants indicate they believe it is a federal, not a City or Portland, issue. “It isn’t Portland’s responsibility, it is the feds. The City should be getting on the feds to get it done.”

- ▶ **Participants frequently perceive protecting endangered species is lower in importance.** Both west and eastside participants generate their lowest ratings for *Protecting endangered species*. There are two reasons provided for these lower ratings. First, participants frequently believe if the other issues on the list are addressed, then the result will be improved habitat for endangered species:

- ✓ “Endangered species will be protected if we just focus on the other issues.”
- ✓ “If we clean up the air and water, then it will solve the problem of endangered species.”
- ✓ “Protecting endangered species is really just part of improving water quality.”

Second, there is also a belief that protecting endangered species is not the City of Portland’s responsibility:

- ✓ “It isn’t the City’s place to work on this issue. It doesn’t have an impact on the issue. The City should work on areas that it can have an impact.”
- ✓ “I don’t feel like Portland really has much to do with protecting endangered species.”

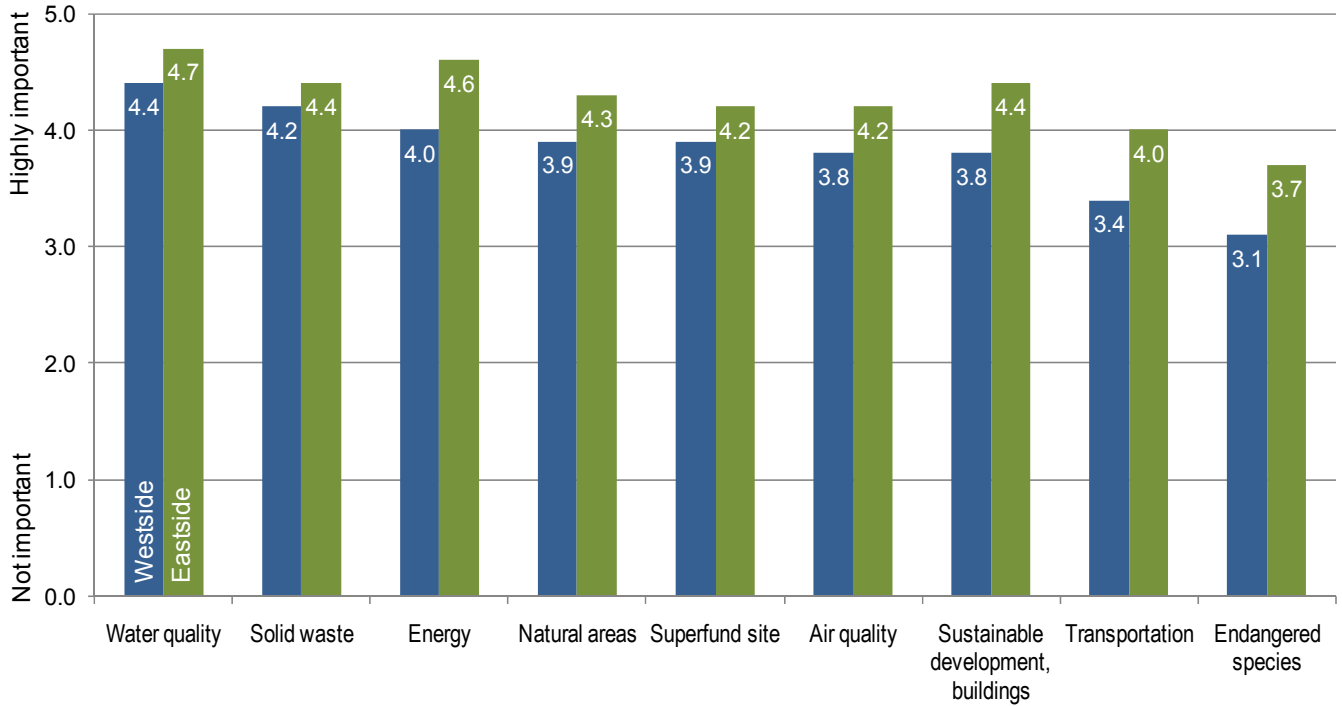
There are also a few participants who say protecting endangered species is simply not that important. “We need to concentrate on protecting the environment for the human species.”

Environmental issues City of Portland should address in next 5 to 10 years

Q: Please rate how important it is to you that the City of Portland address each of the following types of environmental issues in the next 5 to 10 years.

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25

Average ratings



III. Awareness & Reputation of BES

ALMOST ALL BELIEVE EITHER THE CITY OF PORTLAND OR THE WATER BUREAU PROVIDES RATEPAYERS WITH SEWER AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT SERVICES.

When asked what organization is responsible for providing sewer and stormwater management services to their home, only 1 participant out of 49 volunteers the Bureau of Environmental Services. All other participants either say “the City of Portland,” or the “Water Bureau.”

The reason for this response is simple — they pay their bill to the Water Bureau, so ratepayers assume that the Water Bureau is the organization responsible for providing the service. In addition, however, it is also clear that participants frequently perceive water and sewer service to be very similar, and connected, services. For example, it appears to be common knowledge that the sewer portion of their bill is determined by the amount of water that they use. And when talking about what they believe they can do to help improve water quality, they frequently cite examples of ways to conserve water.

When asked what BES has to do in order to provide sewer service, participants cite two dimensions — pipes and treatment plants. “Treatment plants and piping.” “Settling tanks, treatment plants, then they dump it into the Columbia.”

When asked about what is involved in stormwater management, participants frequently start talking about overflows into the Willamette River. “They are spending incredible amounts of money to keep spills from going into the Willamette River.” However, they are often uncertain whether or not any treatment of stormwater occurs prior to it entering the river. “I think there is some filtering of the water before it goes in to the river.” “I think stormwater goes directly into the river, doesn’t it?”

BES RECEIVES SOME PRAISE FOR THE BIG PIPE PROJECT, DOWNSPOUT DISCONNECTION PROGRAM, AND BIOSWALES.

When asked about what, based on anything they know about how sewer and stormwater service is provided in Portland, BES is doing well, there is frequently a few seconds of silence as participants consider the question. In keeping with the low level of awareness of BES, the lists of positives generated by participants are relatively short:

- ▶ **The Big Pipe.** In all of the groups, participants mention the Big Pipe project — although not always by name — as something that BES is doing right. “The Big Pipe. The Willamette was a disgrace before that.” “They are fixing the problem of the overflows into the Willamette River.” “They have arranged for improvement to sewer pipes. There’s been a lot of digging.” However, at this point a few participants point out that “you won’t know if all the new pipe is going to solve the problem until it is finished.”

- ▶ **Downspout disconnection program.** In 3 of the 4 groups, the downspout disconnection program is cited as something BES has done a good job with. “You get a discount if you re-direct your stormwater.” “They offer incentives to disconnect your downspouts.”
- ▶ **Bioswales.** In three of the groups, participants mention that BES is responsible for the bioswales that are appearing around Portland. “The bioswales are real nice.”
- ▶ **Cost.** In two of the groups, participants specifically mention the cost of sewer service in a positive manner. “It is invisible, so it must be cost effective.” “It’s expensive, but that’s good. Hopefully it forces people to modify their behavior.”

Other positive comments heard in only one group include: the treatment plant, encouraging the use of gray water, public education, water fountains, and parks around water storage locations.

RATEPAYERS SAY OVERFLOWS INTO THE WILLAMETTE, BIG BILLS, AND POOR COMMUNICATIONS ARE THE DOWNSIDE TO BES.

Participants were also asked where BES needs to improve. No one concern was mentioned in all four groups, again most likely a reflection of the lack of awareness of what BES does. “It is hard to say how they can improve because I don’t know what they are responsible for.”

Comments include:

- ▶ **Overflows into the Willamette.** In 3 of 4 groups, the issue of overflows into the Willamette River is mentioned as an area that needs improving. “They have not cured the problem of overflows. Every time it rains, there are overflows, even with the Big Pipe.”
- ▶ **High bills.** Cost came up in only the westside groups. “Sewer bills keep going up. People will move if the rates get too high.” “Money for bike paths. Twenty million bikes are important, but rates are up tremendously and that needs to stop.”
- ▶ **Poor communications.** In the two westside groups, communications is mentioned as an area that needs improvement. “They need to improve how they communicate. They didn’t talk to the neighbors before they came and put bioswales on our street and there was no where to park before they did it and now it is terrible.” “There needs to be more public education on sustainable options for stormwater.”

Other negative comments heard in only one group include:

- ▶ “The infrastructure needs improvement and they don’t know how to raise the money for it.”
- ▶ “They don’t plan very well.”
- ▶ “BES needs to work better with other parts of the City. We wanted to replace our sidewalk with pavers so the water could get through, but the City wouldn’t let us do it.”
- ▶ “The cost to connect to the sewer is very high.”
- ▶ “They made us connect to the sewer and said they would give us a credit for our dry well, but it took years before we got it.”
- ▶ “When there are backflows into a basement it is dumped back on the homeowner.”

PARTICIPANTS OFTEN BELIEVE USING RATEPAYERS' FUNDS EFFICIENTLY SHOULD BE BES'S TOP PRIORITY.

Participants were then asked to rank a list of BES's current responsibilities from the one they believe is most important (#1) to the one they believe is least important (#6). It was pointed out to participants that by ranking a responsibility as least important, it did not mean that it was unimportant.

The responsibilities included:

- ▶ Manage stormwater and wastewater collection systems in compliance with permits and other regulatory requirements.
- ▶ Use ratepayers' funds efficiently and effectively.
- ▶ Improve and maintain the water quality and overall health of the Willamette River, Columbia Slough and other local rivers and streams such as Johnson Creek.
- ▶ Inform and educate residents and businesses about bureau projects and environmental issues.
- ▶ Maintain the sewer and stormwater collection system so as to minimize sewer overflows and basement backups.
- ▶ Integrate the use of green stormwater management techniques such as green streets, eco-roofs, and green street facilities.

Some participants say ranking the list of responsibilities is a difficult task, noting that "they are all important" or "BES should be working on all of them." However, almost all were able to complete the task. Also, note that again, there are differences between west and eastside participants. Key findings include:

- ▶ **West and eastside participants are likely to rank using ratepayers' funds efficiently and effectively as BES's most important responsibility.** A little over half of the westside participants (13 of 24) ranked this as BES's number one responsibility. Of eastside participants, 7 of 25 provided a number one ranking for this responsibility. Very few — only 1 from the westside groups and 2 from the eastside groups — ranked it as least important.

Participants say they ranked efficient use of ratepayers funds as the highest priority for one of two reasons. First, there is a sense among many that they don't want to see rates increase:

- ✓ "If they use the funds effectively, rates won't go up."
- ✓ "I am in a situation where I may lose my job, so it makes me think more about efficiency."
- ✓ "We have to live within our budgets, but I don't see government doing that."

Others say they believe that it is not possible for BES to do well on any of the other responsibilities unless they make wise use of ratepayer funds:

- ✓ "If they use funds efficiently and effectively, then all the rest will be well done."

- ✓ “The other responsibilities don’t fall into place if efficient use of funds isn’t there.”
- ✓ “If they would use funds efficiently and effectively then they can do more.”

- ▶ **Maintaining the sewer and stormwater collection system so as to minimize sewer overflows and basement backup is “their job.”** Of the westside participants, 7 of 24 indicated maintaining the system to minimize sewer overflows and basement backups should be BES’s top priority as did 5 of 25 of the eastside participants. When asked why, participants say they see this as a key part of BES’s job.

Discussion of this responsibility frequently centers around the problem of basement backups. While none of the participants had experienced a sewer backup in their basement, in each group there was someone with a story about someone who did.

- ✓ “My brother had a backup in his basement and it was terrible. Then his wife had a heart attack.”
- ✓ “Backups are not covered by insurance and they are a danger to human health.”

Younger ratepayers, who frequently have never heard of the problem, are often distressed to hear that if there is a backup in their basement it will be their responsibility to have it cleaned up.

- ▶ **Managing stormwater and wastewater collection systems so they stay in compliance with permits and other regulatory requirement is typically of less importance.** Participants frequently appear uninterested in this responsibility and say “it’s their job, what they should be doing.” “I assume every city does this. It should be innate.”

- ▶ **Participants believe water quality will improve if BES fulfills their other responsibilities.** When asked why the ranking for *Improving water quality in the Willamette River, Columbia Slough and other local rivers and streams* is typically lower, especially given that they rated improving water quality so highly in the prior question, participants say that they believe if the other responsibilities are met, then the result will be improved water quality.

- ▶ **Educating residents and businesses also ranked relatively low.** Informing and educating residents and businesses is typically ranked at the bottom, usually a “5” or “6.” Participants say that while this is important, they do not see it is a primary responsibility and surprisingly often say the public needs to step up and make an effort to find the information.

- ✓ “We know that someone has put together information. It is the public’s responsibility to find it.”
- ✓ “We know what to do. We just need to do it.”

- ▶ **Eastside participants show a much stronger interest in “green” stormwater management techniques.** While only one westside participant ranks integrating green stormwater management techniques as BES’s top responsibility, six eastside participants do. Westside participants and some eastside participants often say that in the context of the other responsibilities, integrating green techniques simply is not as important:

- ✓ “Other things are more important.”

- ✓ “This doesn’t have to be taken care of right away.”

However, others, especially on the eastside, see using green techniques is the solution to the problem:

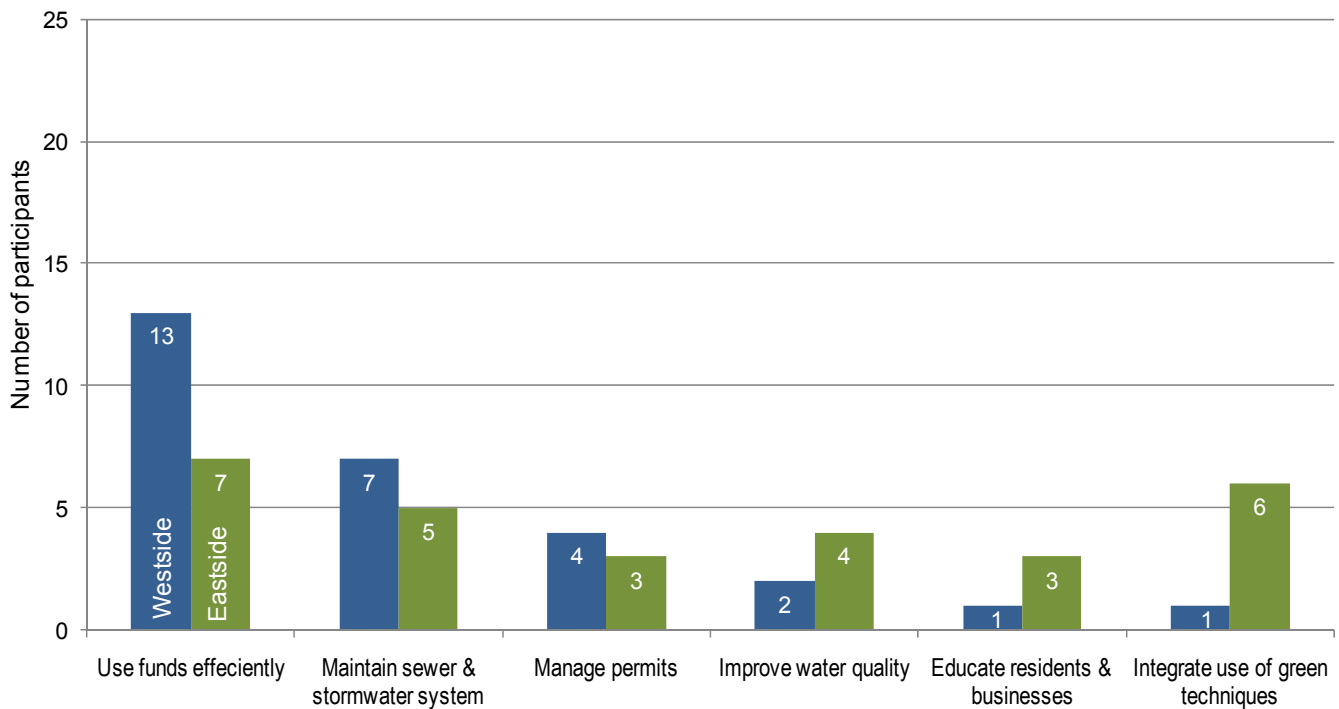
- ✓ “Doing this will actually improve things.”
- ✓ “Using green techniques is addressing the source of the problem.”

Ranking of BES responsibilities

Q: Please rank each of the following responsibilities from the one you believe is BES’s most important responsibility (#1) to the one that is least important (#6).

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25

Number of participants who rank each responsibility as #1



RATINGS FOR BES PERFORMANCE ARE RELATIVELY LOW FOR BOTH WEST AND EASTSIDE RATEPAYERS.

After discussing the reasons for their ranking of BES responsibilities, participants were asked to rate the performance of BES on the same list of responsibilities. Again a “1” to “5” scale is used, with “1” being poor performance and “5” being excellent performance. Key findings include:

- ▶ **Participants frequently provide “don’t know” responses.** The number of “don’t know” responses vary considerably between the responsibilities — ranging from a high of 14 out of 25 eastside participants saying they don’t know how to rate BES on staying in compliance with permits, to 1 of 24 westside participants who didn’t know to rate BES on educating residents and businesses.

Participants frequently admit that it is difficult to get them to pay attention to what an agency like BES is doing:

- ✓ “Unless it’s a big deal, people don’t pay attention.”
- ✓ “I don’t pay attention unless it effects me personally.”
- ✓ “I have two kids under three and my water bill comes directly out of my checking account. I throw it away. I don’t have time.”

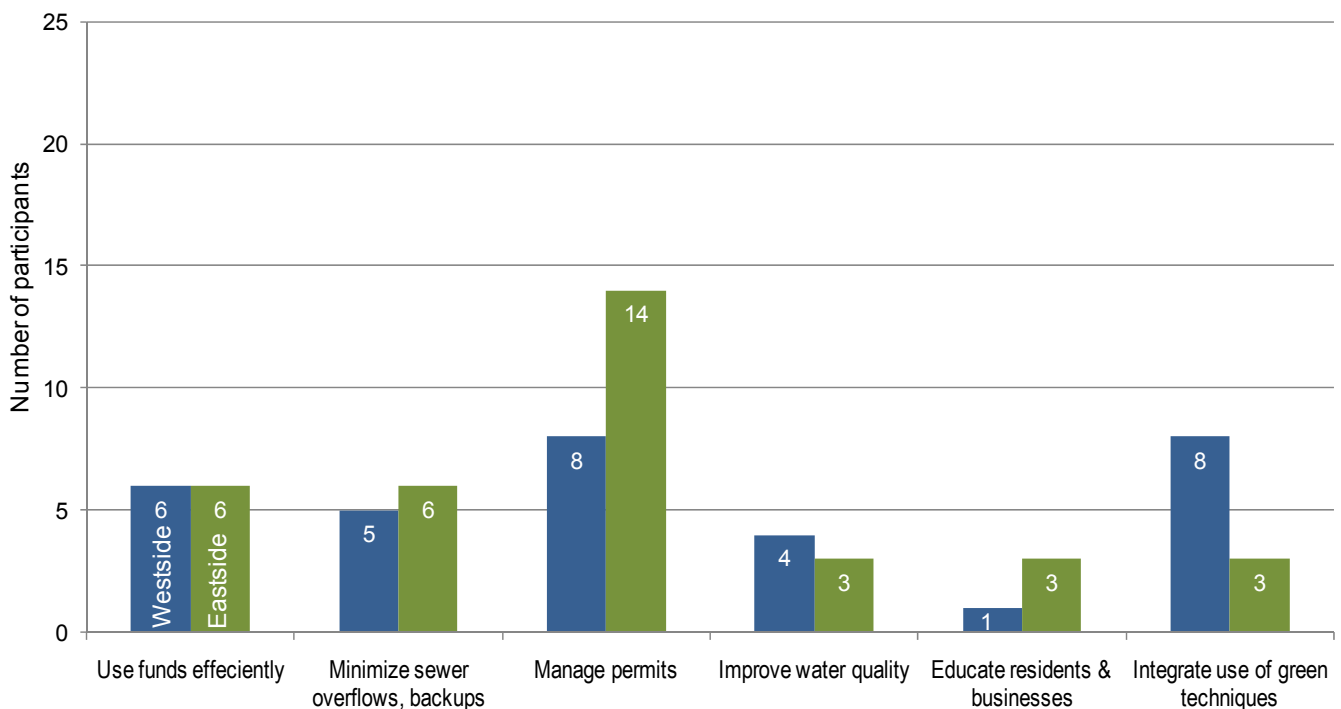
However, others say they don’t believe BES makes an effort to attract their attention. “I am not certain they have a way to tell people what’s going on.” “I got a flyer a month ago. They need to remind me that they exist.”

BES performance ratings – don’t know responses

Q: *Please rate how good of a job BES does at meeting each of these responsibilities.*

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25

Number of participants who check “don’t know”



- ▶ **Ratings are frequently at the low end of the scale.** Ratings from both from both westside and eastside participants are typically a “3” or lower. In particular it is important to note that the responsibility considered most important — using ratepayers funds efficiently — is one of the lowest rated — a 2.5 from westside participants and 2.7 from eastside participants.

Somewhat surprisingly, the responsibilities with the highest level of “don’t know” responses — managing the stormwater and wastewater collection systems in compliance with permits and other regulatory requirements — received the best rating (3.9 from westside ratepayers).

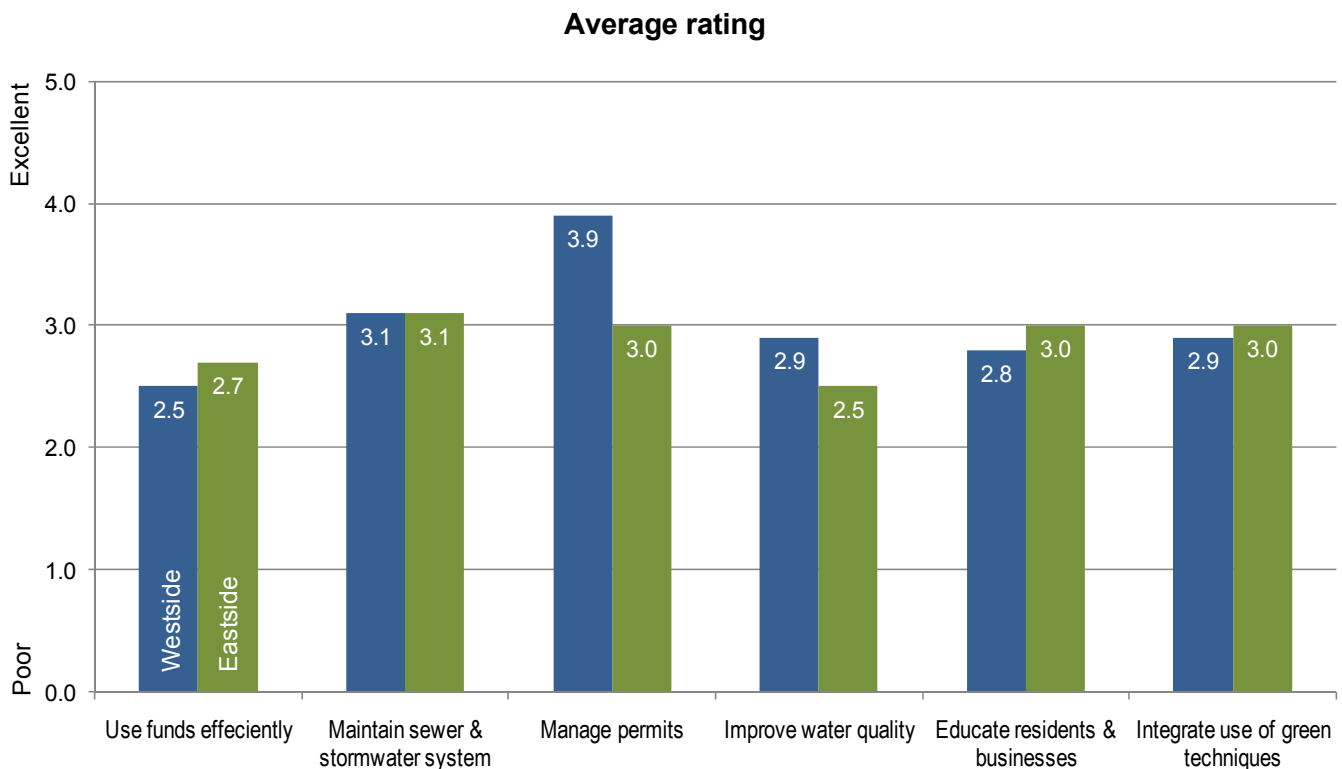
Participants often say they simply gave a “3” rating on all responsibilities. “I gave a lot of ‘3s.’ I think they are doing an average, adequate job.” Others say they find it difficult to determine if there have been any results:

- ✓ “They do big jobs that take a long time. I haven’t seen any results, like with the Big Pipe. “It is hard to know what’s happening.”
- ✓ “Honestly, with managing permits, I have no clue. Why am I going to know?”

BES performance ratings

Q: *Please rate how good of a job BES does at meeting each of these responsibilities.*

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25



PARTICIPANTS SAY THEY HAVE LEARNED LITTLE ABOUT BES DURING THE PAST YEAR.

When asked what they have learned in the last year about BES, many participants are unable to cite any specific information. “Nothing.” A few, however, are able to cite specific examples. However, note that with the exception of multiple comments about the Big Pipe project, each of these are typically noted by individual participants, and there is little, if any, agreement in the groups that other participants have also heard this information:

- ▶ “One section of the Big Pipe was completed sooner for less money than expected.”
- ▶ “The Big Pipe is moving along.”
- ▶ “They are working on the Big Pipe on the eastside.”
- ▶ “There are drugs in the river.”
- ▶ “They want to take money from the sewer for bike paths and scholarships.”
- ▶ “That they are understaffed.”
- ▶ “The Superfund site is not getting the money, the labor, or the contracts to get it cleaned up.”
- ▶ “Rates are going up, a pretty hefty increase.”

CURRENTLY, PARTICIPANTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO LEARN ABOUT BES THROUGH INSERTS IN THEIR BILL.

Participants agree that it is difficult to attract their attention. The most common suggestion for how best to communicate with them is through their quarterly or monthly bill. However, in any group there are about half who believe the bill is a good way to send them information and half who say they never read bill inserts.

In addition to bill inserts, particular suggestions include neighborhood meetings or neighborhood newsletters, letters to individual households being effected by work in their neighborhood, flyers on the door, *The Oregonian*, *Willamette Week*, local newspapers, and Facebook. One participant recommends billboards with an easy-to-remember website and several in the group agree.

A number of participant also pointed out, “There is no one way to reach everyone. You have to do lots of different things.”

RATEPAYERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO WANT INFORMATION ABOUT RESULTS AND HOW THEY CAN HELP.

When asked what they would like to learn, comments fall into one of four categories:

- ▶ **Information about how water quality is improving.** The most frequent request is for information that illustrates how water quality is improving:
 - ✓ “Show me how the Willamette is improving.”

- ✓ “Give me data that shows over time how things have improved.”
- ✓ “Tell me how what they are doing will effect myself, my children, and my grandchildren.”
- ✓ “I want to know what steps they are taking to stop the overflows, how long it will take, and will it work.”
- ▶ **Information about what individual households can do to contribute.** A strong desire is voiced in all the groups for information about they as individuals can do to help improve water quality.
 - ✓ “Tell me what I can do. Like kits that help you conserve water.”
 - ✓ “Explain how I can save money and save the environment at the same time.” “Tell me about incentive programs.”
 - ✓ “This is Portland. We will work as a team together if you will just tell us what to do.”
- ▶ **Information about where the money is going.** Participants, especially on the eastside, also express a desire for information about how funds are currently being spent and why rates are continuing to increase.
 - ✓ “I want to know what they are doing to make the bills so high. It seems like the water bill always goes up, not matter what.”
 - ✓ “I want to know what can be done without a lot of extra cost.”
 - ✓ “Why are rates so high? Where is the money going? Why are we paying an extra portion for scholarships.”
 - ✓ “Water is not rare in Oregon. Why do we pay so much?”
- ▶ **Information about what they can do to lower their bill.** Participants on the eastside in particular often feel that they are unable to control the constantly increasing cost of their sewer and stormwater management service and are interested in learning what they can do to control this cost. “I want specific instructions about how to reduce my sewer and stormwater costs.”

IV. Perceptions of the Willamette River

PARTICIPANTS KNOW WATERSHEDS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT HAVE ONLY A VAGUE IDEA OF WHAT IT IS.

Participants appear to know that watersheds are important, and yet have difficulty explaining exactly what a watershed is. One participant, a student, admitted that “I heard a graduate paper on watersheds a month or so ago, but I can’t really tell you what it is.” Examples of definitions provided by participants include:

- ▶ “Watersheds start at the glacier.”
- ▶ “Tributaries and land mass around a river.”
- ▶ “Water on the street.”
- ▶ “A collection of water.”
- ▶ “They protect the soil and help maintain the quality of the water. It filters the water, right?”
- ▶ “The area that traps the water. It helps stop flooding.”
- ▶ “Watersheds are all around us. It is the natural environment, the eco system.”

JOHNSON CREEK IS THE PORTLAND WATERSHED CITED MOST OFTEN.

Somewhat surprisingly, when asked to name the five watersheds in Portland, it is not the Willamette River watershed, but the Johnson Creek watershed that is named in all four groups. Other watersheds cited include:

- ▶ Willamette River (3 groups — 1 westside, 2 eastside)
- ▶ Fanno Creek (2 westside groups)
- ▶ Bull Run (2 westside groups)
- ▶ Tryon Creek (1 westside group)
- ▶ Washington Park (1 westside group)
- ▶ Columbia Slough (1 eastside group)
- ▶ “My backyard” (1 eastside group)

When a map illustrating the five watersheds — The Columbia Slough, Johnson Creek, Willamette River, Fanno Creek, and Tryon Creek — is shown to participants, there is awareness, not surprisingly, of the Columbia Slough and the Willamette River watersheds. However, there is considerably less awareness that Fanno Creek and Tryon Creek are watersheds within Portland.

MOST RATEPAYERS BELIEVE THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL DECLINE IN WATER QUALITY AS THE WILLAMETTE RIVER FLOWS THROUGH PORTLAND.

To assess participants' current perception of water quality in the Willamette River, they were asked to provide two ratings of Willamette River water quality:

- ▶ As it enters the City of Portland
- ▶ As it leaves the City of Portland

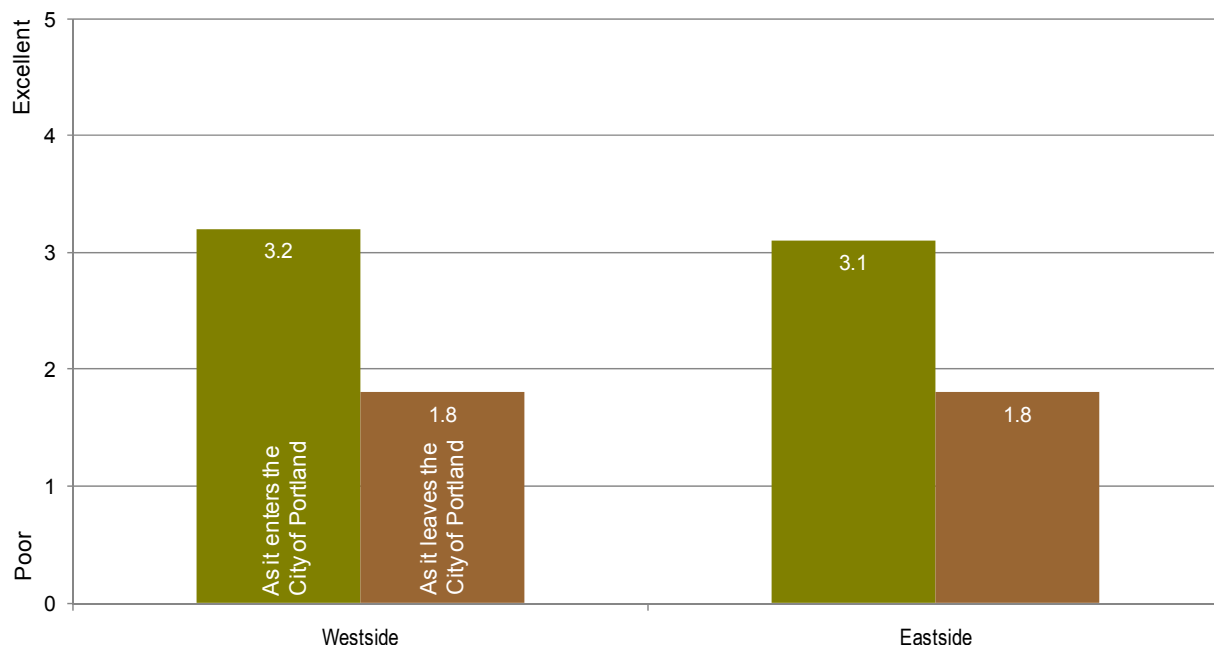
Again a 5-point scale was used with a “1” indicating poor quality and a “5” excellent water quality. As illustrated on the graphic below, few participants believe the Willamette enters Portland with excellent water quality. The most common rating on the 5-point scale is a neutral “3” for the Willamette’s water quality as it comes into the City. However, as the graphic illustrates, most participants believe there is a substantial decline in water quality as the Willamette River flows through Portland. The most common rating for the water quality in the Willamette as it leaves Portland is a “2” or a “1.” In fact, all but three participants provided lower ratings for the Willamette’s water quality as it leaves Portland compared to when it came in (of the three, two provided the same ratings for entering and leaving and one provided a higher rating as the water leaves Portland).

Willamette River Water Quality

Q: *Please rate your perception of the quality of the water in the Willamette River in two locations:*

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25

Average rating



BEFORE REACHING PORTLAND, RATEPAYERS SAY THE WILLAMETTE IS EFFECTED BY AGRICULTURAL RUNOFF, INDUSTRIAL POLLUTION, AND POLLUTION GENERATED BY OTHER CITIES.

The vast majority of ratepayers in the focus groups understand that the Willamette faces a number of challenges prior to coming into Portland. Only two participants rate water quality in the Willamette as excellent, a “5,” as it enters the City of Portland. According to participants, the Willamette’s water quality is effected by agricultural runoff, including both chemicals and animal waste, industrial pollution, and pollution from other cities before it reaches Portland.

RATEPAYERS CITE A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES THE WILLAMETTE FACES AS IT RUNS THROUGH PORTLAND.

When asked why their ratings are consistently lower for water quality in the Willamette after it leaves Portland, ratepayers cite a number of factors, including:

- ▶ **Industrial pollution**, including industry that “dumps chemicals” in the water.
- ▶ **Sewer overflows** “whenever it rains.”
- ▶ **Portland’s bridges**, which several participants note are “very dirty. If you have ever been in a boat and gone under the bridges you know what I mean.” There is also a perception that pollution results when traffic crosses the bridges.
- ▶ **Cars**, including cars in general, runoff from city streets, and car washing.
- ▶ **The Superfund site** is specifically mentioned by two of the groups, one on the westside and one on the eastside.
- ▶ **Power boats** operating on the River.

MOST BELIEVE THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE, IF ANY, IMPROVEMENT IN THE WILLAMETTE’S WATER QUALITY OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS.

When asked if they believe water quality in the Willamette has improved, stayed about the same, or gotten worse in the last five years, the most common answer is that it has stayed about the same. If they believe water quality is better, ratepayers attribute the improvement to: the Big Pipe project, “the Big Pipe is helping;” closing down the worst industrial/business polluters, “They shut down the worst polluters on Columbia Boulevard;” or increased attention and awareness by individuals of their actions, “People are more educated.”

Ratepayers who say the Willamette’s water quality has stayed the same or gotten worse frequently say they base this information on the fact that people continue to be told not to swim, eat the fish, or drink water from Willamette or simply what the river looks like:

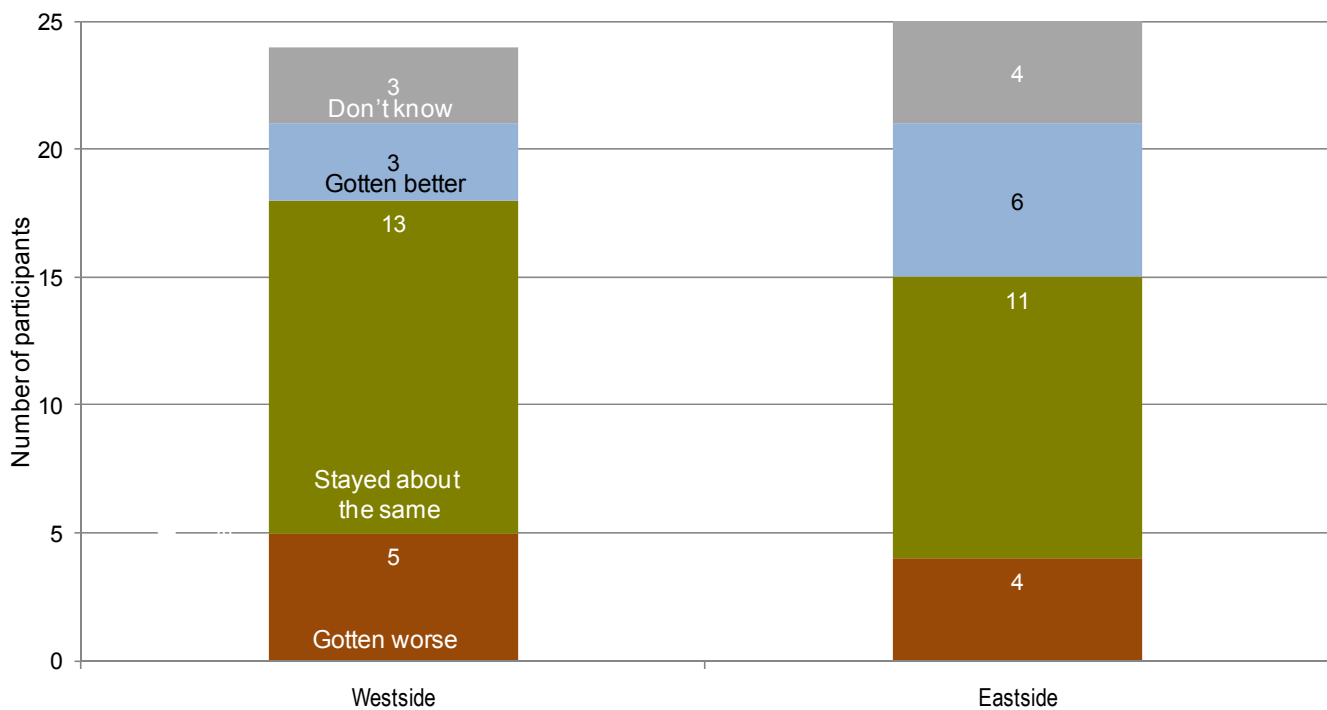
- ▶ “I haven’t heard that you can swim in it or drink it. It smells and is just as brown as 25 years ago.”
- ▶ “The Willamette still looks disgusting.”

A few say their perception is based on hearing about sewer overflows into the Willamette. “There are more overflows than there used to be.”

Perception of change in Willamette River water quality over last five years

Q: *Would you say water quality in the Willamette River has gotten better, stayed about the same or gotten worse in the last five years?*

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25



WHILE MOST HAVE A GENERAL AWARENESS OF THE BIG PIPE PROJECT, THERE IS LITTLE AWARENESS OF WHEN IT WILL BE COMPLETED OR WHEN IT WILL HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WILLAMETTE.

When asked if they have heard of the Big Pipe project, most participants appear to have some awareness and a very general concept of the purpose of the project:

- ▶ “It is a huge, long pipe that connects the sewer to North Portland.”
- ▶ “It is supposed to separate sewer and stormwater.”
- ▶ “It is a better sewer pipe that should help with overflows into the Willamette.”
- ▶ “The Big Pipe was needed because the system couldn’t handle the volume. It is supposed to prevent overflows into the Willamette.”
- ▶ “It takes stormwater into the Big Pipe. I don’t know what happens next.”

However, most participants believe that the Big Pipe will not have a positive impact on the Willamette until it is completed and they are not sure when the project will be completed.

- ▶ “The Big Pipe is a positive step, but it isn’t connected yet, so it is not impacting the Willamette yet.”
- ▶ “Will it have a positive impact? I don’t know. I hope so. It isn’t completed yet, so you don’t know.”
- ▶ “I don’t think it is working yet. I was down by the Willamette River when a rain storm went through. It wasn’t even a big storm, but as soon as it started raining you could see the overflow out of this pipe and it was gross.”
- ▶ “The westside is done, but I don’t know about the eastside.”

Participants also appear to be, in general, unsure that the Big Pipe will solve the problem of overflows into the Willamette.

- ▶ “The way the population is growing, I don’t know how long the Big Pipe project will solve the problem.”
- ▶ “The Big Pipe only solves part of the problem.”
- ▶ “I know it isn’t done and I don’t know when it is done whether or not it will make a huge difference or just a small difference.”

WHEN SHOWN DEQ’S WILLAMETTE WATER QUALITY INDEX, RATEPAYERS’ REACTION IS PRIMARILY SKEPTICISM.

Participants were shown the following chart, which was taken from the City of Portland Service Efforts and Accomplishments: 2008-09.

**Oregon DEQ
Willamette Water Quality Index**

	2004-2005	2008-2009
Coming into Portland	87 (good)	91 (excellent)
Going out of Portland	85 (good)	90 (excellent)

When asked their reaction to the information provided in the chart, participants say they are “surprised,” “skeptical,” and “I don’t believe it.” Specifically, ratepayers say they want to know:

- ▶ **The complete list of factors that are used to determine the rating.** Participants were told the ratings are “based on eight water quality factors, such as temperature and bacteria.” However, there is both a desire for a complete list of the factors and a belief by some that eight factors may not be sufficient to make an accurate determination of water quality. “I am suspicious about what factors were not included.”
- ▶ **What time of year were the measurements taken and where were they taken.** There is a belief by many that the measurements must have been taken at a time and location designed to make the ratings look good. “It is all in timing. What are the ratings after a good rain and an overflow?” “You can make statistics say anything you want.”

Participants say that to call water quality in the Willamette “excellent,” either when it comes into Portland or goes out of Portland, is not credible because they know they would not want to eat fish caught in the River, swim, drink, or even touch the Willamette as it goes through Portland:

- ▶ “If they (government water quality experts) love their children and family, would they let them swim in the Willamette in Portland or eat the fish?”
- ▶ “If the water quality is excellent, why can’t you eat the fish, why does it smell so bad, and why are we all scared to go swimming in the Willamette?”
- ▶ “People who fish in the Willamette make me cringe.”
- ▶ “When you can’t swim in the Willamette I would say it is pretty contaminated.”

In addition to the above issues, participants also indicate that the clarity of the water in the Willamette tells them that the water quality is not excellent:

- ▶ “All I see is brown sludge. That is not excellent water quality.”

- ▶ “The water in the Willamette is not clear. It is less clear today than it was when I was a kid, so it cannot get a higher rating.”

When asked what would have to be true about the Willamette River for them to believe the water quality was excellent, participants consistently say:

- ▶ They would need to feel comfortable letting their children or grandchildren swim in the water, including not getting a rash from exposure to the water.
- ▶ They would need to believe you can eat fish caught in the Willamette.
- ▶ The Willamette would need to not smell bad.
- ▶ “You would have to take me down to the River and show me.”

V. Next Steps for BES

RATEPAYERS BELIEVE THE CITY SHOULD FINISH THE BIG PIPE PROJECT, OFFER MORE INCENTIVES TO INDIVIDUALS TO MAKE CHANGES, AND REGULATE INDUSTRY.

When asked what they believe BES should do to improve water quality in the Willamette and other area rivers and streams, participants provide suggest the following:

- ▶ **Finish the Big Pipe.** Participants want to see this project completed, and they are, as noted earlier, unclear when this will happen. They support the idea of separating the sewer from stormwater collection systems because they understand this will reduce, if not eliminate, overflows into the Willamette.
- ▶ **Offer incentives to individuals, households, or businesses.** Participants indicate they would like to see incentives in the following areas:
 - ✓ **Downspout disconnection.** Participants generally approve of the downspout disconnect program and want the City to continue to financial incentives for households to take action to keep stormwater out of the system.
 - ✓ **Rain barrels.** In addition to the downspout disconnect program, participants in the eastside groups frequently suggest incentives to install rain barrels.
 - ✓ **Bioswales and roof gardens.** Several groups suggest incentives to encourage the installation of more bioswales and roof gardens.
 - ✓ **Alternative uses for gray water.** Participants in the eastside groups frequently mention the need to encourage the use of gray water. “Encourage alternative methods of using gray water.”
- ▶ **Stricter controls on industry.** Some participants believe regulations are already in place to control industrial pollution but that the City needs to do a better job of enforcing these regulations. Other say “more industry regulations are needed.”
- ▶ **Get the community involved.** In several of the groups, participants say that involving the community is important:
 - ✓ “Portland has a good community and we want to help. If the City had something like a clean-up day, people will do it.”
 - ✓ “They need to involve the whole community so that we all feel like we are contributing.”
 - ✓ “When I was a Boy Scout we painted those cut-outs on the stormdrains, they should do more of those types of activities.”
- ▶ **Determine what needs to be done and then do it.** There are some participants who believe additional research is needed in order to determine the best approach to cleaning up the Willamette. “They need to identify what makes the River so bad and then change it.”

- ▶ **Work with other agencies and organizations.** A few participants point out that the City can't fix all the problems itself and should be working with others to improve water quality. "The City can't fix it all. A coordinated, state-wide effort is needed."

Other suggestions by only one participant include finding the "right" person to head up the effort, better use of ratepayer dollars, not funding bike paths or scholarships, telling people how Portland compares to other cities, implementing a cap and trade system, and banning two-stroke engines.

THERE IS AGREEMENT THAT MORE PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH TO HOMEOWNERS AND BUSINESSES ON HOW TO PREVENT WATER POLLUTION IS NEEDED.

After providing suggestions on next steps BES should take on an open-ended basis, participants were asked to rate six steps BES could take in the next five to ten years on the 5-point scale, with "1" being not important and "5" being very important. The steps include:

- ▶ Provide more public information and outreach on how homeowners and businesses can prevent pollution
- ▶ Require owners of property near rivers and streams to clean up contaminated sites and/or restore habitat for fish and wildlife
- ▶ Prohibit the sale of certain products or chemicals in the City, so they do not enter the rivers or streams
- ▶ Help property owners pay for cleaning up contaminated sites near rivers and streams
- ▶ Help property owners pay to restore habitat for fish and wildlife
- ▶ Increase sewer and stormwater rates for owners of contaminated sites near river and streams

Results from the exercise shows that both west and eastside participants are very supportive of BES providing more public information and outreach on how to prevent pollution. This is in keeping with the comments in all of the groups that individuals want clean rivers and streams and want to know what they can do to advance that effort.

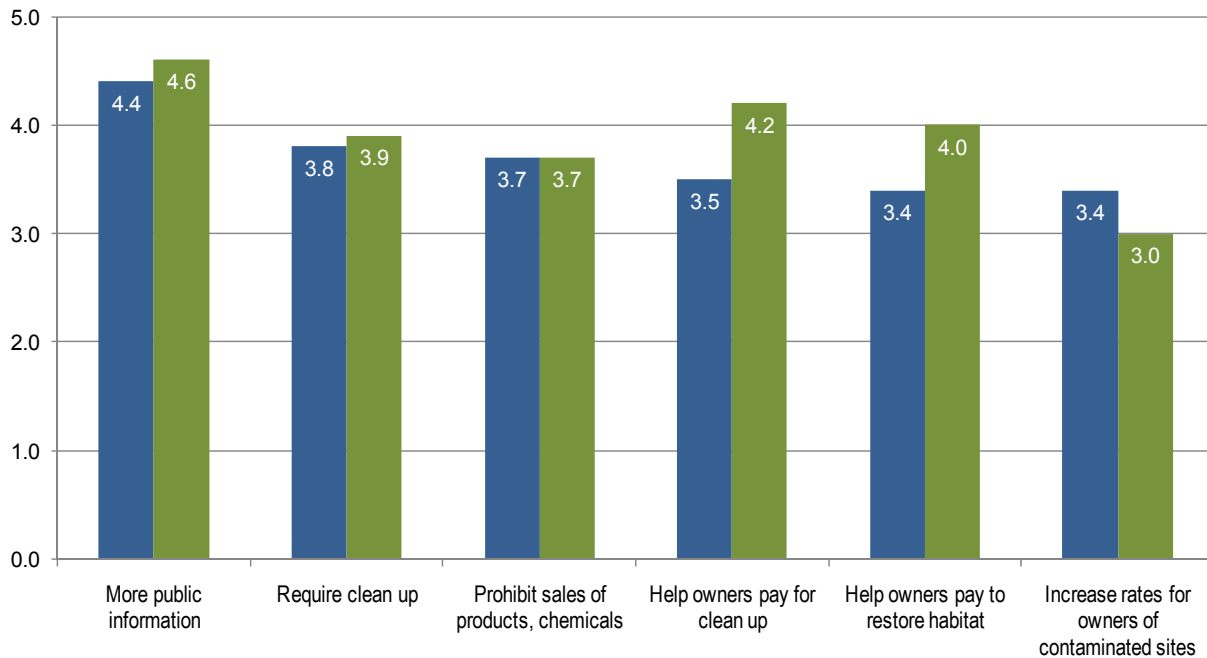
- ▶ "We feel powerless. We would do more if we knew what to do."
- ▶ "We are all intelligent people, but we don't know what to do."

Possible next steps for BES

Q: Please rate how important it is that BES take each of the following steps in the next five years.

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25

Average rating



THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE CITY SHOULD “HELP” OR SHOULD “REQUIRE” PROPERTY OWNERS TO CLEAN UP AND RESTORE SITES IS OFTEN DIFFICULT FOR PARTICIPANTS.

The question of whether or not the City should be helping property owners pay for either cleaning up contaminated sites near rivers and streams or to restore habitat for fish and wildlife is a more difficult question for participants. Eastside participants are, in general, more supportive of the idea of helping than westside participants. However, both groups struggle when discussing whether or not ratepayers should help property owners with these costs. It is also clear that many participants really had not considered the concept that if the City helps property owners pay for clean up or restoration, that means they, as ratepayers, are helping pay for the cleanup. Most participants don't like the idea that their sewer and stormwater rates would go up to help pay for cleanup of contaminated sites or the restoration of habitat. However, they also don't like the idea of pollution, once identified, not being cleaned up.

Even after explaining the cost of helping others would be borne by ratepayers is introduced, however, there are those in each group that believe help should be extended:

- ▶ **It is a community problem, so all should help pay.** In each group there are several participants who are strong advocates that it is not just the responsibility of property owners

but that all households contribute to pollution so everyone should help pay for cleanup and restoration.

- ✓ “Everyone who lives in the community is effected so we should all pay.”
- ✓ “Water flows down a hill over a lot of people’s property before it gets to the river, so we all contribute and we should all help pay.”
- ✓ “It is our river, it effects us all.”

► **Assigning blame isn’t important, cleaning up pollution and restoring habitat is.** Those who are supportive of the idea of helping property owners often say that deciding who is at fault isn’t as important as cleaning up the problem.

- ✓ “Establishing fault isn’t so important. We can’t get caught up in that and be in the courts for years. We just need to clean it up.”

For many of the participants, the answer to whether or not help should be extended is, “It depends on the situation.” Factors ratepayers would consider:

► **It depends on the attitude of the property owner.** For many participants, whether or not a property owner should receive assistance depends on the attitude of the owner — if the owner demonstrates a desire to clean up a contaminated site or restore habitat and then properly maintain the site, then they should be helped. On the other hand, if the property owner is not cooperative, most are unwilling to provide assistance.

- ✓ “If the property owner wants to change, then they should be helped. If they don’t, then the City should take the last step — increase the property owner’s sewer and stormwater rates to pay for the cleanup.”
- ✓ “It should be a three-step process. First, educate them. Then help them. If they refuse to change, then require them to clean it up.”
- ✓ “It depends on if they are an ‘active polluter’ or not. If they know what they are doing and they keep doing it, fine them and use the money to clean it up.”

► **It depends on if the property owner knew about the problem prior to buying the property.** Participants believe that if a property owner is not responsible for creating the problem — it was there prior to buying the property and they did not know about it when the property was purchased — then the property owners should be helped to resolve the issue.

In addition to purchasing property with an unknown problem, some participants also say that it would be unfair for property owners to pay for cleaning up a problem they are not responsible for creating even when they own the property. “What if someone is dumping waste on your property and you don’t know about it. You shouldn’t have to pay to have it cleaned up.”

► **It depends on whether it is a business or an individual.** For some participants whether or not assistance is given depends on whether the property in question is a residence or a business. “If they are making money off the property than they should be able to pay to have the problem fixed.”

Participants also make it clear that raising rates, even for owners of contaminated sites near rivers and streams, should be a last resort, taken only after attempting to get the property owners to clean up the site voluntarily.

VI. Superfund Site

UNDERSTANDING OF THE SUPERFUND SITE IS TYPICALLY SUPERFICIAL AND RATEPAYERS HAVE LITTLE IDEA OF WHAT BES'S ROLE SHOULD BE IN THE EFFORT.

As noted earlier, when asked to rate the importance of cleaning up the Portland Harbor Superfund site, many participants — slightly over half of those who live on the westside and slightly under half of those from the eastside — responded with a “don’t know.”

When asked what the Superfund site is, there are a few more knowledgeable individuals in each group. These participants say that the Superfund site:

- ▶ **A Superfund designation means there is a “great deal” of contamination.** One or two note that the contamination includes not just the river, but also the area on either side of the Willamette.
- ▶ **Sediment at the bottom of the River is contaminated, making the site difficult to clean up.** Those who indicate they have some understanding of the problem say that it is sediment that is contaminated, making clean up difficult, if not impossible. “It’s a catch-22. If they try and clean it up, it will make water quality even worse.”
- ▶ **A special federal fund has been set up to pay for clean up.** In addition to federal dollars, a few say that some of the money in the Superfund has also been provided by industries that have contributed to the problem.

Given the general lack of knowledge, it is not surprising that when asked where the Superfund site is located, none have an understanding of the size of the area involved. Even the “experts” in each group typically identify a smaller section of the Willamette River as being the location of the Superfund site.

- ▶ “It is the area around Swan Island.”
- ▶ “Near the Burlington Northern Bridge.”
- ▶ “It is by the Port of Portland and the University of Portland.”

When shown a map with the Superfund site outlined, participants are almost always surprised at its size. “It is bigger than I thought.” A few expected it to stretch further south to include Ross Island.

When asked what role the City of Portland and BES should play in the coordinated effort to clean up the Superfund site, participants are typically silent. In general, participants appear to believe that the Federal government, perhaps through the EPA, should be leading the effort. In addition, some ratepayers assumed industries responsible for the pollution — “those who did it in the first place” — should also be involved. In addition to these two key players, it is also frequently assumed that “environmental groups” will also be at the table.

The City of Portland's role in the process is less clear to participants. It appears that they do want the City to be involved, but not necessarily to take a leading role:

- ▶ “The City should be involved. They need to know what’s happening.”
- ▶ “Maybe the City should be doing testing of the water in the area. They need to pass new regulations if necessary.”
- ▶ “The City needs to educate us on how the cleanup is going.”
- ▶ “Maybe the City should put together a network of volunteers to help with the effort.”

It is important to note that in each group, while discussing the Superfund site, participants point to what they consider to be a “disconnect” between the DEQ Willamette River Water Quality Rating chart and the fact that much of the Willamette River in Portland is a Superfund site.

- ▶ “How can DEQ say the water quality in the Willamette is ‘excellent’ when it qualifies as a Superfund site?”
- ▶ “How can it be a Superfund site if the water quality is ‘excellent’?”

VII. Individual Action & Willingness to Pay for Cleaner Rivers & Streams

PARTICIPANTS APPEAR TO HAVE GOTTEN THE MESSAGE THAT INDIVIDUALS AND INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS CONTRIBUTE TO WATER POLLUTION.

When asked if individuals contribute to water quality issues in the Portland area, most participants are quick to agree that “we are all part of the problem.” Most also agree that individuals are “significant” contributors, although there are some who disagree and say “our part is small compared to industry” and others who point out, “one person doesn’t contribute much, it is all of us together.” At this point in the groups, several tell stories about their parents’ generation — usually fathers — dumping chemicals into the storm drain or down the drain. “That’s what the previous generation did. We can, and have, changed.”

When asked to identify the ways individuals contribute, ratepayers create a relatively long list, including:

- ▶ Fertilizers on lawns and gardens
- ▶ Pesticides and weed killers
- ▶ Disposing of household chemicals improperly
- ▶ Driving cars
- ▶ Washing cars
- ▶ Dumping “drugs” down the drain
- ▶ Household cleaners
- ▶ Not picking up after pets

The list is somewhat shorter when participants are asked to list things they have done to reduce their impact on water quality. Actions taken include:

- ▶ Buying “eco-friendly” products for both inside and outside the home.
- ▶ Water conservation methods, including collecting water as it warms up before taking a shower, using low-flow showers or toilets, flushing less, using less water when brushing teeth.
- ▶ Turning in used paint.
- ▶ Taking out lawn and planting native or drought tolerant plants.
- ▶ Being careful when changing car oil.

- ▶ Recycling.
- ▶ Using stormwater or gray water to water their garden.

When asked what they plan to do in the future, installing rain barrels is the only mention.

When asked about barriers to changing, participants say the primary issues are cost — “green can be more expensive” — lack of knowledge of what to do, simply “laziness.” A few point out that “it needs to become common place, like recycling” and that “incentives are needed to get people to change.”

SEWER AND STORMWATER SERVICES ARE SOMEWHAT LOWER IN PERCEIVED VALUE THAN OTHER UTILITIES EXCEPT FOR CABLE.

In order to gauge the perceived value of what participants are currently paying for sewer and stormwater management services, a two-step process was followed as the last exercise of the group. Participants first estimated their cost for each of seven basic utilities — gas/electric, phone (landline and cell), cable, water, sewer, stormwater, and garbage and recycling. This was done in order to ensure that participants thought about what they pay for each utility prior to providing their perception of the value they receive.

As could be expected, given that households represented in the groups ranged in size and most participants initially believed the Water Bureau provides sewer and stormwater service as well as water service, estimates for water, sewer, and stormwater cover a wide range and it is likely that many estimates are inaccurate. Water estimates ranged from \$120 per quarter to \$10 a month. Sewer estimates ranged from \$125 per quarter to \$10 a month. Stormwater ranged from \$100 per quarter to \$0.

However, what is important, regardless of the amount they estimated, is their perception of the value they receive.

Not surprisingly — no one enjoys paying bills — few participants provided “5” rating, indicating a excellent value, for any of their utilities. It is therefore useful to normalize the data to identify how participants rated the value for the dollar for their sewer and stormwater bill relative to the other utility bills they pay. To do this the average rating for all the utilities was determined for the westside and the eastside participants. Then it is determined how far above or below the overall average each individual utility’s perceived value is. Those utilities with higher than average ratings are perceived as better values, those with below average ratings are perceived by participants as a lower value. Also, note that if there is no bar showing for a utility, that means the rating is right at average.

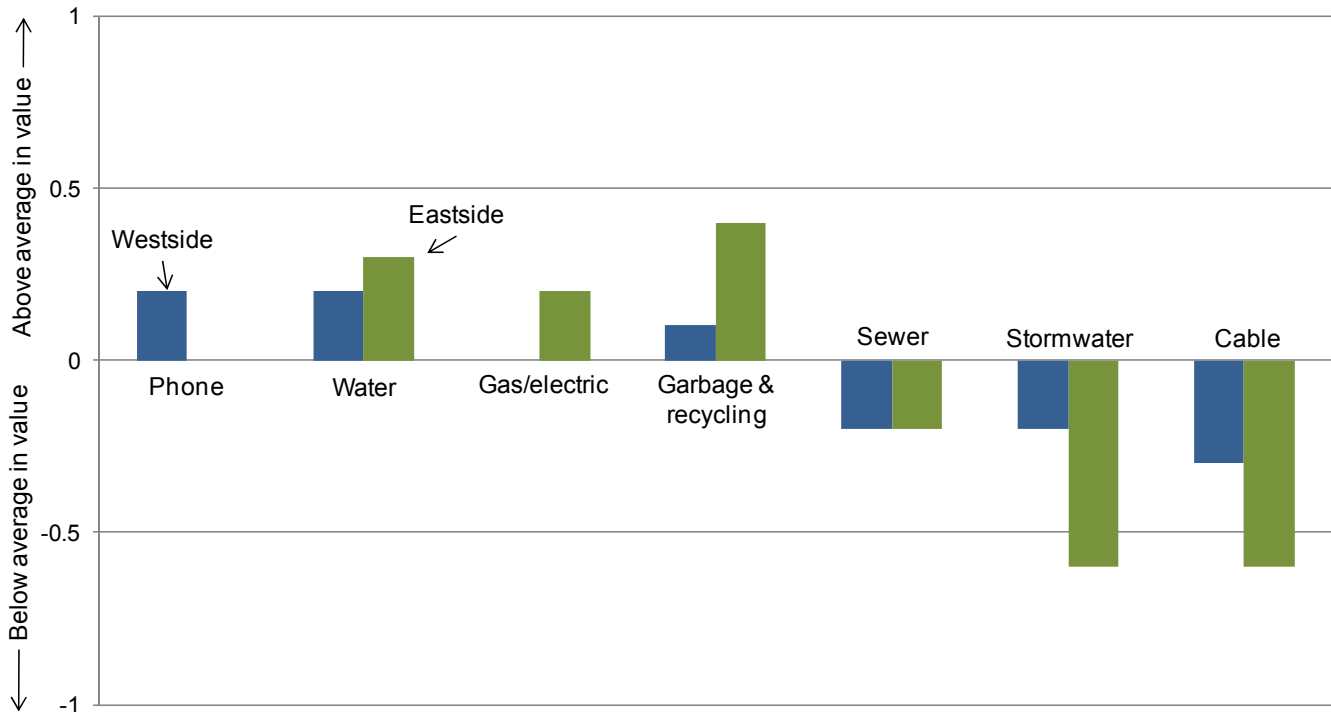
As the graphic shows, participants perceive they receive the most value for their phone, water, gas/electric, and recycling bills, while they perceive lower value for their sewer, stormwater, and cable bills. This is particularly true for the eastside participants, whose value ratings in general show greater differentiation between the different utilities.

Value for dollar spent on home utilities

Q: Rate your perception of the value you receive for what you pay for each of these utilities.

Westside n=24; Eastside n=25

How far above or below average perceived value



ALMOST ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE WILLING TO PAY MORE TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY — BUT THEY WANT EVIDENCE OF IMPROVEMENT.

At the end of the group, participants were asked if they were willing to pay a dollar more per quarter on their sewer bill in order to improve water quality in all of the watersheds in the City of Portland.

The answer from most ratepayers is “yes.” However, ratepayers often also say that it is a “ridiculous” question:

- ▶ “Of course I would pay a dollar more to improve water quality. A dollar isn’t much. But the question is the efficient use of funds and what they are going to do with the money.”
- ▶ “I would pay a lot more than a dollar if I knew it was really going to solve the problem.”
- ▶ “I will pay a dollar more as long as I know where the money is going.”

- ▶ “It isn’t the money. It is where the money is going. What are they doing with it? Are they making a difference?”
- ▶ “I will pay more if a solution is reached.”
- ▶ “I will give you more than a dollar if I know what I am buying. It has to more than just ‘costs are going up.’”

While being willing to pay more, participants almost make it clear that they are concerned about what they perceive as the high cost of sewer and stormwater management service in Portland:

- ▶ “We pay some of the highest rates in the country. The water is good, but the sewer is high.”
- ▶ “We are already paying more.”
- ▶ “The rates can’t just keep going up. Times are hard.”

Key Conclusions & Recommendations

The following provides Campbell DeLong Resources, Inc.'s conclusions and recommendations based on the current research as well as past experience. This section is intended to provide both a summary of the key recommendations that grow directly from the research and to introduce our further judgments and recommendations based on a comparison of these findings with previous research.

1. PORTLAND RESIDENTS WANT IMPROVED WATER QUALITY IN AREA RIVERS AND STREAMS. THEY DON'T KNOW IF BES IS MAKING ANY PROGRESS IN ACCOMPLISHING THIS GOAL.

There is no question that Portland area ratepayers care about water quality in area rivers and streams:

- ▶ When asked what environmental issues the City of Portland should be addressing in the next five to ten years, ratepayers in all of the groups come up with improving water quality or specifically cleaning up the Willamette on an unaided basis.
- ▶ When asked to rate the importance of a list of environmental issues that the City of Portland could address, improving water quality generates the highest average rating from both westside and eastside ratepayers.
- ▶ Consistently throughout the groups ratepayers say they are willing to take personal steps to improve area water quality.
- ▶ When asked whether the City should help property owners with contaminated sites to clean up their site, most ratepayers are very clear that this task is not about finger pointing or assigning blame — it is about determining the source of pollution, figuring out how to clean it up, and then cleaning it up.
- ▶ Even after 20 years of steadily increasing sewer and stormwater bills, most ratepayers also say they are willing to pay more to clean up area rivers and streams.

There is, however, one “but.” They are willing pay more only if they know that their dollars are making a difference — that water quality is improving. Currently, they are not sure this is happening. They know about the Big Pipe. But they don't know when it will be finished or if, once finished, it is really going to solve the problem of overflows into the Willamette. What they know is they shouldn't swim in the Willamette in Portland or eat fish caught in the Willamette in Portland. When they visit the River, it smells. They report seeing overflows when it rains.

2. TO ATTRACT RESIDENTS' ATTENTION, KEEP COMMUNICATIONS SIMPLE AND FOCUSED ON WHAT THEY WANT TO KNOW.

Attracting ratepayers attention so that they know what BES is doing to improve water quality in area rivers and streams is not easy — even group participants know that it is difficult to catch their attention. And there is no doubt that cleaning up area rivers and streams is not a simple process. Identifying solutions is not easy. Some solutions are highly complex and requires highly skilled staff to implement. Some solutions cost a lot of money and require long timelines. For people working on these issues everyday for years at a time, the idea that communicating with the public needs to be simple may appear to be an insult or as a suggestion to “talk down” to Portland residents. It is neither. It is an acknowledgement that BES staff knows what they are doing and that Portland residents live busy lives and will not stop and pay attention to information that they are uninterested in or do not believe relates to their lives.

So what are Portland ratepayers and residents interested in learning about BES? Based on discussion during the groups, the following is what Portland residents want to know:

- ▶ What has been happening over time to Portland area rivers and stream? Is water quality getting better? If not, why not?
- ▶ What's the plan going forward and why do you believe it will work? When, if ever, will it be safe to swim in the Willamette River in Portland?
- ▶ What's it going to cost? How do I know BES is making the best use of the ratepayers' dollars? Don't just say “costs go up every year.”
- ▶ What can I as an individual do?

Communications with the general public that do not address the above questions are likely to be disregarded by residents.

3. TO CHANGE THE SKEPTICISM THAT THEIR DOLLARS MAY NOT BE WELL SPENT, FOCUS COMMUNICATION ON RESULTS, NOT TASKS.

As noted above, most Portland sewer and stormwater ratepayers are willing — although not eager — to pay more in order to clean up area rivers and streams. However, they are typically skeptical that their dollars are being well spent and this skepticism can make it increasingly difficult to implement future programs to improve water quality:

- ▶ Many believe that Portland is paying some of the highest sewer and stormwater rates in the county, yet they are unlikely to believe there has been substantial improvement in water quality in the Willamette River in the last five years.
- ▶ When asked to prioritize BES's responsibilities, it is clear that many believe that using ratepayers' funds efficiently and effectively is BES's most important responsibility.

However, using ratepayers' funds efficiently and effectively receives some of the lowest performance ratings.

- ▶ The perception of the value they receive for what they pay for sewer and stormwater is lower than most other utilities, including phone, water, gas/electric, and garbage and recycling.

Erasing this skepticism will not be an easy or short-term task. Certainly it is a challenge that many government agencies struggle with on a regular basis. However, it is the key to BES's ability to support future programs. How can this be accomplished? It is not enough, as one participant in the groups points out, to tell ratepayers that "costs are going up," so sewer and stormwater rates must go up. Instead, we recommend BES focus on communicating the result Portlanders are looking for — improved water quality. We are not talking, of course, about a list of tasks that BES is undertaking. Ratepayers are not interested in tasks, or even large projects like the Big Pipe — unless a task is on their street or otherwise impacts their lives directly. Instead, they are interested in outcomes and facts that illustrate a realistic improvement in water quality over time. Of course, BES needs to also keep in mind that the ultimate result Portlanders are looking for is the ability to swim and fish in the Willamette River.

Appendix

Methods

RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the research is to inform the City of Portland Bureau of Environmental Services regarding current public attitudes and opinions regarding BES and the sewer and stormwater services it provides. Specific areas investigated include:

- ▶ Awareness and reputation of BES.
- ▶ Perceptions of water quality in the Willamette River and understanding of BES's efforts to clean up the River.
- ▶ Attitudes toward steps BES could take to improve water quality in area rivers and streams.
- ▶ Awareness and understanding of the Willamette River Superfund site and BES's role in the cleanup of the site.
- ▶ Willingness to pay for cleaner rivers and streams in the Portland area.

STUDY DESIGN

A total of four focus groups were conducted — two with ratepayers who live on the west side of the Willamette River and two with ratepayers who live on the east side of the River.

CDRI developed screening questionnaires and a discussion guide for the focus groups, working in consultation with BES staff.

PARTICIPANT CRITERIA

All potential participants for the focus groups were screened to ensure the following:

- ▶ Live inside the Portland city limits.
- ▶ Household pays their water and sewer bill.
- ▶ For two of the groups, live in either Southwest or Northwest Portland.
- ▶ For two of the groups, live in North, Northeast, or Southeast Portland.
 - ✓ In these groups, minimum of five live east of 82nd Avenue.
- ▶ Range of ages. Quota of 4 per group under the age of 35.
- ▶ A 50/50 male female split was maintained.

FOCUS GROUP LOGISTICS

The westside focus groups were held at VuPoint, a focus group facility with a one-way mirror in Northwest Portland on the MAX line. The two eastside groups were held in two different locations — one close-in eastside in the Multnomah County building right off the Hawthorne Bridge and the second in outer Southeast at the East Portland Community Center on SE 106th.

Each of the groups were held in the evening and lasted approximately 90 minutes. Each group was videotaped. Participants were served refreshments. All participants were given a \$50 Fred Meyer gift card in appreciation for their attendance.

The groups were moderated by Martha DeLong, CEO of Campbell DeLong Resources, Inc.

INTERPRETING FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

Focus groups provide a wealth of information about an issue, product, or service. CDRI has conducted hundreds of groups and has seen the results consistently validated. However, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that the purpose of this project is to explore attitudes, motivations, and opinions, not frequency or distribution. When reading this report and using the information it contains, remember the following:

- ▶ Consistency, consensus, and the range of opinion are what we are looking for in focus group research. The consistency and consensus may be evident among participants in a single group or found in the responses of two or more groups.
- ▶ While focus groups also provide valuable input regarding the range of opinions that exist within a population, when analyzing the focus groups, we are striving to explain how people feel and why they have a particular viewpoint, not to provide a precise percentage.
- ▶ The number of people participating in a focus group is limited and participants have been carefully selected based on specific criteria. As a result, the findings cannot be projected to a larger population on a one-to-one basis.
- ▶ When watching a group live or viewing the DVD of a group, be careful not to give too much importance to the opinion of any one participant. Although that participant may be articulate and express a desired viewpoint, the opinion may not be that of the entire group.

SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

BES CUSTOMER AND PUBLIC AWARENESS RESEARCH

Summer 2010

CDRI 799

DATE _____ Group I – Westside _____
PHONE NUMBER _____ Group II – Westside _____
RESPONDENT NAME _____ Group III – Eastside _____
RESPONDENT ADDRESS _____ Group IV – Eastside _____
INTERVIEWER'S INITIALS _____

CALL RECORD MATRIX	
Quota, gender (Q1)	_____
Not a billpayer (Q2)	_____
Outside Portland city limits (Q3).....	_____
Area of Portland quota (Q4a/4b)	_____
Age quota (Q5).....	_____
Employment screen (Q6a/6b)	_____

INTRODUCTION

(TO RANDOM HOUSEHOLD RESPONDENT:) Hello, I'm (FIRST AND LAST NAME) from Campbell DeLong Resources. We are conducting a brief study for the City of Portland. My I please speak with a household member who is 18 years of age or older? **IF NOT AVAILABLE, MAKE CALLBACK APPOINTMENT FOR FIRST POSSIBLE TIME.**

SCREENING

1. Gender. **DO NOT ASK. RECORD.**

Male 1
Female 2
Unknown 9

2. Do you or someone else in your household pay the household's water and sewer bill, or is someone else, for example a landlord, responsible for paying this bill?

Household pays water/sewer 1
Someone else pays water/sewer 2 **POLITELY DISCONTINUE**
DO NOT READ: Don't know 3 **POLITELY DISCONTINUE**

3. Do you currently live inside or outside the city limits of Portland? **READ LIST IN ORDER. RECORD.**

Inside Portland city limits..... 1 **CONTINUE**
Outside Portland city limits..... 2 **POLITELY DISCONTINUE.**
DO NOT READ: Don't know 3 **POLITELY DISCONTINUE.**

4a. Do you live in Northwest, Southwest, North, Northeast, or Southeast Portland?

Northwest 1 **QUALIFIED FOR GROUP 1 OR 2**
Southwest 2 **QUALIFIED FOR GROUP 1 OR 2**
North 3 **QUALIFIED FOR GROUP 3 OR 4**
Northeast..... 4 **QUALIFIED FOR GROUP 3 OR 4**
Southeast 5 **QUALIFIED FOR GROUP 3 OR 4**
DO NOT READ: Don't know **POLITELY DISCONTINUE.**
ASK FOR REFERRAL

4b. **IF NE OR SE ASK:** Do you live east or west of 82nd avenue?

- East..... 1
- West..... 2
- DO NOT READ:** Don't know 3

**POLITELY DISCONTINUE.
ASK FOR REFERRAL**

QUOTAS FOR GROUPS 1 & 2 (WESTSIDE):

- ▶ 11 or 12 from Southwest
- ▶ 3 or 4 from Northwest

QUOTAS FOR GROUPS 3 & 4 (EASTSIDE):

- ▶ 6 or 7 from SE
- ▶ 6 or 7 from NE
- ▶ 2 or 3 from North
- ▶ Also, minimum of 5 live east of 82nd

5. What is your age please?

_____ Years of age

MINIMUM OF 4 PER GROUP UNDER THE AGE OF 35

6a. Do you work for a public or private organization that provides water or sewerage services?

- Yes 1 **POLITELY DISCONTINUE**
- No 2 **CONTINUE**

6b. Do you, or does anyone in your household, work for a market research company?

- Yes 1 **POLITELY DISCONTINUE**
- No 2 **CONTINUE**

INVITATION

PARTICIPANTS QUALIFY FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS BASED ON WHERE IN PORTLAND THEY LIVE (QUESTIONS 4A/B):

As part of our research on local issues, we will be conducting a focus group with area residents like yourself on (**APPROPRIATE DATE/TIME FROM BELOW**). A limited number of people are being invited. You will have the opportunity to share your opinions and influence important decisions about a range of issues. The group will be 90 minutes long and you will receive \$50 gift card from Fred Meyer for sharing your opinions with us. This is a research project. We are not selling anything. **EXACT ADDRESSES FOR ALL LOCATIONS BELOW.**

Will you please join us?

Yes..... **CONTINUE**

No..... **DISCONTINUE POLITELY. ASK FOR REFERRAL**

So that we can mail/email you a confirming letter and map, I need either your name and address (**INCLUDING ZIP**) or an email address. I also need a phone number where you can be reached during the day, and one where you can be reached in the evening.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

_____ZIP_____

DAY PHONE_____

EVENING PHONE_____

EMAIL_____

Thank you for your assistance. We'll look forward to seeing you on (**DATE, TIME**).

GROUPS 1 AND 2 (WESTSIDE):

Date & time: June 29; 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm

Location: VuPoint - 220 NW 2nd Avenue, Portland, OR 97209

GROUP 3:

Date & time: June 30, 7 to 8:30

Location: Multnomah Building (Multnomah County building) 501 SE Hawthorne, Room 112 (Board Room on first floor)

Parking structure adjoins the building, entering on Hawthorne and there is on-street parking. Bike lockup in front of building. If there is a parking fee, we will pay for it.

GROUP 4:

Date & time: July 1, 7 to 8:30

Location: East Portland Community Center, 740 SE 106th Ave, Multipurpose Room.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

BES CUSTOMER AND PUBLIC AWARENESS RESEARCH
DISCUSSION GUIDE OUTLINE

Summer 2010

CDRI 799

I. MODERATOR'S INTRODUCTION

RESEARCHER INTRODUCES FOCUS GROUP PROCESS, INCLUDING USE OF CAMERA, ONE-WAY MIRROR, VIDEO AND AUDIO TAPING OF GROUP, TAKING TURNS, PARTICIPATION.

II. ATTENDEE INTRODUCTION

ATTENDEES INTRODUCE THEMSELVES. EACH PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- ▶ First name?
- ▶ Area of Portland live in?
- ▶ Job?

III. IDENTIFICATION OF KEY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES & BES ROLE

1. Tonight we are going to be talking about a number of environmental issues the City of Portland will need to deal with over the next five to ten years. I want to start by learning what you believe are the most important environmental issues that the City of Portland should be addressing over the next five to ten years. You just call them out and I will write them on the chart. **LIST ON CHART.**

2. **Handout.** Now I have a quick exercise I want you to complete. **HANDOUT RATING SHEETS.** I want you to rate how important you believe it is for the City of Portland to address each of the following environmental issues in the next five to ten years. We will use a “1” to “5” scale, where a “1” is of little to no need to address the problem and a “5” indicates you believe this should be a top priority of the City to address this issue in the next 5 to 10 years.
 - ▶ Okay, let’s hear how you rated each of these. Let’s have a show of hands for anyone who rated each one at the high end of the scale – a 4 or 5. **SHOW OF HANDS.**
 - ▶ **FOR EACH AS APPROPRIATE.** Why is this issue important? Why did you rate it at the high end of the scale. Why is this issue a lower priority?

3. Now let’s talk specifically about one environment-related service that you all use everyday – your sewer and stormwater drainage service. First, what organization is responsible for providing sewer service to your home? **LIST ON CHART.**
 - ▶ What about stormwater management? What organization is responsible for stormwater management? **LIST ON CHART**

4. The Bureau of Environmental Services, or BES, is responsible for providing sewer and stormwater management services to all residents and businesses in Portland. What does that mean? When I say that BES provides sewer service, what’s included? What does BES have to do to provide sewer service?

5. What about stormwater management? When I say that BES provides stormwater management services, what's included? What does it do in order to provide this service?

6. Overall, what is BES good at doing? What are its strong points?

7. What is BES not so good at doing? Where does it need to improve?

8. **Handout.** Let's look at a new handout. This is a list of 6 key responsibilities of BES. The first thing I want you to do is rank these from the most important responsibility – “1” – to the least important – “6”.
 - ▶ Okay, let's hear what you did. **FOR EACH:** How many of you ranked this responsibility number 1? Why? Why is this so important? Why not? Why isn't this a number 1 priority?

9. **Handout.** Now let's go back to this list. This time I want you to rate BES's performance in each of these areas. Use the 1 to 5 scale again, with a 1 indicating that you believe BES does a very poor job in this area and a 5 means you believe BES does an excellent job in this area.
 - ▶ Let's hear what you did. **FOR EACH:** How did you rate BES's job performance on this responsibility? Why?

10. How do you get information about what BES is doing?
 - ▶ In the past year, what have you learned about BES?
 - ▶ From what source did you learn it?
 - ▶ How do you want to learn about what BES is doing?

IV. UNDERSTANDING OF WATERSHED ISSUES & CURRENT WATER QUALITY

1. Now let's talk awhile about a couple of the environmental issues from the first list – improving water quality in area rivers and streams, including the Willamette River. I want to start with some very basic questions. How many of you know what I mean when I say “watershed?” What is a watershed?

- ▶ Why are watersheds important?
- ▶ What are the key watersheds in Portland?

So that we are all on the same page – here is a definition of watershed. — *A watershed is the land area drained by a river, stream, or creek.* Does this make sense to you?

And here is a **map** that shows the five watersheds within the city of Portland – Columbia Slough, Johnson Creek, Fanno Creek, Tryon Creek and the Willamette River.

2. What are the biggest problems facing the Willamette and other rivers and streams as they run through Portland? **LIST ON CHART.**

- ▶ What are the factors that cause these problems? **LIST ON CHART.**

3. **Handout.** Now I want to get your opinion of the current quality of the water in the Willamette River. I want you to provide two ratings – the first is for the quality of the water in the Willamette when it comes into the city. **SHOW ON MAP.** The second is the quality of the water when it leaves the city. **SHOW ON MAP.**

- ▶ This time I want you to provide your rating on scale of “1” to “5.” A “1” is very poor and a “5” is excellent.
- ▶ First, how many of you had a lower rating for the Willamette's water quality when it left Portland than when it came in? Okay, now let's hear what you wrote. **GO AROUND ROOM AND HEAR RATINGS BEFORE AND AFTER.**
- ▶ Why? Why this rating for the Willamette when it enters Portland? What contributes to water quality issues before the Willamette comes into Portland?
- ▶ Why? Why this rating for the Willamette when it leaves Portland? What contributes to water quality problems as it runs through Portland?

4. Compared to 5 years ago, is the water quality in the Willamette River worse, about the same, or better? **HEAR RATINGS.** Why?

5. Over the last 5 years, has the City of Portland, through the programs implemented by BES, had a positive, negative or neutral impact on water quality in the Willamette River? Why?
 - ▶ What has the City done to improve water quality in the Willamette?
 - ▶ **IF NOT MENTIONED:** Have you heard about the CSO or “Big Pipe” project? What do you know? Has this project had a positive impact on the Willamette to-date? Why? Why not?

6. I am going to show you rates that the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has on the Willamette. The ratings are based on eight water quality factors, such as temperature and bacteria, as developed by DEQ. **SHOW CHART**

Willamette Water Quality Index

	2004-2005	2008-2009
Coming into Portland	87 (good)	91 (excellent)
Going out of Portland	85 (good)	90 (excellent)

- ▶ What’s your reaction to this information? Is this good news? Bad news? Why?
- ▶ Does it make sense to you? Why? Why not?
- ▶ The ratings show an improvement in water quality both when the Willamette comes into Portland and when it leaves Portland. Were you aware that there have been improvements in water quality in the Willamette over the last five years?
 - ✓ **IF YES:** How did you learn of the improving water quality in the Willamette?

7. What *should* the City be doing to improve water quality in the Willamette and other area rivers and streams? **LIST ON CHART.**

8. **Handout.** Here's another quick list of steps that BES could take. Again rate the importance of BES taking each of the steps in the next five years. Use the "1" to "5" scale. On the scale a "1" indicates you do not believe it is important to BES to take this step at this time, and a "5" means you believe it is very important for BES to take this step in the next five years.

▶ **HEAR RATINGS.** Why?

9. How many of you are aware that a section of the Willamette River has been declared a Superfund Site by the Federal government? **SHOW OF HANDS.**

▶ Does anyone know where this section of the Willamette is located? **HAVE PARTICIPANTS SHOW ON MAP IF POSSIBLE. IF NOT, SHOW ON MAP AND SAY:** The Superfund Site runs from downtown Portland to the mouth of the Columbia Slough.

▶ Why was this section of the river declared a Superfund Site? What does it mean to be declared a Superfund Site?

10. Clean-up of this section of the Willamette will be a coordinated effort of many organizations. Who should be part of this effort? **LIST ON CHART.**

▶ **FOR EACH ORGANIZATION.** Why? What's their role?

▶ **IF BES/CITY OF PORTLAND NOT MENTIONED:** Why not the City of Portland and the Bureau of Environmental Services?

▶ **IF NECESSARY:** What should BES's role be?

V. UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL IMPACT AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE PERSONAL ACTION

1. We have talked this evening about a number of different factors that impact water quality in the Willamette River and other area rivers and streams. Now I want to ask how, if at all, do we as individuals contribute to water quality problems? **LIST ON CHART.**
 - ▶ Overall, how much of an impact do you think collectively we as individuals have on area water quality? Let's do a show of hands. Let's use the 1 to 5 scale again where a "1" is no impact at all and a "5" is a major impact, as much as many large industries. **SHOW OF HANDS.**
 - ▶ Why?

2. Studies by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have shown that individuals and their households do have a major impact on area water quality. So what can you or your household do to reduce their impact? **LIST ON CHART.**
 - ▶ Has your household done anything? Why? Why not?
 - ▶ What did it do/is it doing?
 - ▶ Is there anything that you plan on doing in the near future? What is it?

3. What do you think are the major barriers that keep individual households from changing their behavior? **LIST ON CHART.**
 - ▶ **FOR EACH REASON:** Why?

VI. PERCEPTION OF SEWER/STORMWATER RATES AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY MORE TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

1. Complete handout. There are two questions on the next handout.

- ▶ First, approximately how much do you pay for gas/electric, phone, cable, water, sewer, stormwater management, garbage & recycling? If you don't know, just put "DK". Because there can be a difference in how frequently you pay each bill — for example monthly, every two months, or every quarter, please indicate that information too.
- ▶ Second, rate your perception of the value for dollar for each of these utilities. Let's use the "1" to "5" scale again where a "1" is little or no value and a "5" is excellent value.
 - ✓ How does your rating for sewer compare to other utilities? Why?
 - ✓ Stormwater management? Why?

2. What if, in order to improve water quality in all of the watersheds in the City of Portland (REFER TO MAP), your sewer/stormwater management bill was increased by \$1 per quarter? If you pay on a monthly basis, that would be about 33¢ per month. What about \$2 per quarter? **CONTINUE UNTIL ALL PARTICIPANTS UNWILLING.**

- ▶ Why? Why not?

VII. CLOSE

1. I have just one last question. What is the one most important thing that BES needs to stay focused on in order to meet the needs and expectations of the residents of Portland?

Thank you.

HANDOUTS USED IN GROUPS

Environmental Issues

Please rate how important it is to you that the City of Portland address each of the following types of environmental issues in the next 5 to 10 years.

	Not Important	Highly Important
Promoting alternative forms of energy	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Improving water quality in area rivers and streams .	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Promoting alternative forms of transportation	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Improving air quality	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Protecting endangered species	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Preserving undeveloped and natural areas	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Reducing solid waste that goes into landfills	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Cleaning up the Portland Harbor Superfund Site.....	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Promoting sustainable development and building practices.....	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk

BES Responsibilities

Please rank each of the following responsibilities from the one you believe is BES's most important responsibility (#1) to the one that is least important (#6).

- ▶ 1 is most important
- ▶ 6 is least important

RANK

- ✓ Manage stormwater and wastewater collection systems in compliance with permits and other regulatory requirements _____
- ✓ Use ratepayers' funds efficiently and effectively _____
- ✓ Improve and maintain the water quality and overall health of the Willamette River, Columbia Slough and other local rivers and streams such as Johnson Creek _____
- ✓ Inform and educate residents and businesses about bureau projects and environmental issues _____
- ✓ Maintain the sewer and stormwater collection system so as to minimize sewer overflows and basement backups _____
- ✓ Integrate the use of green stormwater management techniques such as green streets, eco-roofs, and green street facilities _____

BES Performance

Please rate how good of a job BES does at meeting each of these responsibilities.

	Poor				Excellent						
Manage stormwater and wastewater collection systems in compliance with permits and other regulatory requirements	1	.....	2	.....	3	.....	4	.....	5	.....	dk
Use ratepayers' funds efficiently and effectively	1	.....	2	.....	3	.....	4	.....	5	.....	dk
Improve and maintain the water quality and overall health of the Willamette River, Columbia Slough and other local rivers and streams such as Johnson Creek	1	.....	2	.....	3	.....	4	.....	5	.....	dk
Inform and educate residents and businesses about bureau projects and environmental issues	1	.....	2	.....	3	.....	4	.....	5	.....	dk
Maintain the sewer and stormwater collection system so as to minimize sewer overflows and basement backups.....	1	.....	2	.....	3	.....	4	.....	5	.....	dk
Integrate the use of green stormwater management techniques such as green streets, eco-roofs, and green street facilities	1	.....	2	.....	3	.....	4	.....	5	.....	dk

Willamette River Water Quality

Please rate your perception of the quality of the water in the Willamette River in two locations:

Poor

Excellent

As it **enters** the City of Portland..... 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk

As it **leaves** the City of Portland 1..... 2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk

Next Steps for BES

Please rate how important it is that BES take each of the following steps in the next five years?

	Not Important	Highly Important
Provide more public information and outreach on how homeowners and businesses can prevent pollution.....	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Help property owners pay for cleaning up contaminated sites near rivers and streams	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Help property owners pay to restore habitat for fish and wildlife	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Require owners of property near rivers and streams to clean up contaminated sites and/or restore habitat for fish and wildlife.....	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Prohibit the sale of certain products or chemicals in the City, so they do not enter the rivers or streams .	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk
Increase sewer and stormwater rates for owners of contaminated sites near river and streams.	1.....	2..... 3..... 4..... 5..... dk

Home utilities

Approximately how much do you pay for each of the following home utilities?

Gas &/or electric	\$ _____	per _____	(time period)
Phone (landline & cell)	\$ _____	per _____	(time period)
Cable	\$ _____	per _____	(time period)
Water	\$ _____	per _____	(time period)
Sewer	\$ _____	per _____	(time period)
Stormwater management	\$ _____	per _____	(time period)
Garbage & recycling	\$ _____	per _____	(time period)

Now, rate your perception of the value you receive for what you pay for each of these utilities.

	Little or no value		Excellent value	
Gas &/or electric	1.....	2.....	3.....	4..... 5..... dk
Phone (landline & cell)	1.....	2.....	3.....	4..... 5..... dk
Cable.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4..... 5..... dk
Water	1.....	2.....	3.....	4..... 5..... dk
Sewer.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4..... 5..... dk
Stormwater management.....	1.....	2.....	3.....	4..... 5..... dk
Garbage & recycling	1.....	2.....	3.....	4..... 5..... dk