

CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Policy Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: 12/1/2015 **Approx Start Time:** 2:30 pm **Approx Length:** 30 min

Presentation Title: Clackamas County Service District No. 1 and Tri-City Service District Communication/Outreach Update

Department: PGA/WES

Presenters: Gary Schmidt and Greg Geist

Other Invitees: Amy Kyle, Ed Nieto, Matt Glazewski, Chris Storey, Gari Johnson

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

This is an informational update on efforts by WES and PGA to raise stakeholder awareness of the need to build new solids handling capacity at the Tri-City Plant, impacting both Clackamas County Service District No. 1 (CCSD#1) and the Tri-City Service District. This is the first of on-going monthly updates to the BCC on the collaborative implementation of the strategic communications plan to raise awareness of the capacity issue among customers, stakeholders and the media.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

WES and PGA have been gathering and sharing information with the BCC and stakeholders about the need to increase solids handling capacity at the Tri-City Plant, which will address an increasingly urgent need to add treatment capacity and ensure we continue to protect public health and the environment. Early estimates show that an equitable co-investment in a shared facility by the two districts could save ratepayers \$120 million over the next two decades and is the most cost-effective solution to the problem. The two districts have a rich history of working together and sharing resources to provide outstanding service to customers in both districts at some of the lowest rates in the region.

After 30 years of service – now serving a population that has more than doubled – the Tri-City plant has exceeded its capacity to handle solids. Both districts are currently experiencing faster-than-expected population growth. Our digesters, which play an important role in the solids handling process, are at a high risk of failure. If the system fails before capacity is added, public and environmental health as well as ratepayer dollars would be at risk. The lack of increased solids handling capacity could also result in violations of the Tri-City Plant's Clean Water Act Permit.

A DHM survey commissioned by WES of customers in both districts revealed that an overwhelming number of customers (94%) are very satisfied with their sewer service and would support paying a little more to support efforts to upgrade the infrastructure to maintain a high quality of service. However, only 14% of customers in the survey could identify WES as their service provider. This communications effort seeks to raise awareness of WES and the valuable services it provides while also educating stakeholders about the pressing capacity shortage issue. The communications plan also seeks to ensure that the process is inclusive and transparent.

The communications plan makes extensive use of website updates, direct mailings to customers, newsletters, fact sheets, newspaper articles/opinion pieces, videos, social media posts, surveys, public presentations, tours of WES facilities, and GovDelivery as well as other outreach efforts. Consultants in the effort with PGA and WES include the communications firms

of Barney & Worth and Enviroissues. Communication efforts will also include members of the Regional Wastewater Treatment Capacity Advisory Committee, The Tri-City Advisory Committee, CCSD#1 RiverHealth Advisory Board, elected officials and others in partner cities as well as interested parties.

Concurrently, the communication plan also seeks to keep customers and other stakeholders aware of developments in the ongoing discussion regarding future governance of both districts.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):

Is this item in your current budget? YES NO

What is the cost? \$150,000

What is the funding source? CCSD/TCSO Budget

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

- How does this item align with your Department's Strategic Business Plan goals?

This item supports several goals of WES' Strategic Business Plan:

1. WES will have a comprehensive plan in place that will achieve sewer improvements and funding to support the expected regional 20-year growth horizon.
2. WES' priorities and policy recommendations will reflect optimum economies of scale, defined as lowest rate per user per district to achieve the 20 year Comprehensive Plan.
3. WES will provide its partner communities the wastewater infrastructure capacity required to support 5 years of projected growth.

- How does this item align with the County's Performance Clackamas goals?

This item aligns with Performance Clackamas goals by seeking to build a strong infrastructure, ensure safe, healthy and secure communities, build public trust through good government and seeking to honor, utilize, and invest in our natural resources. Upgrading our infrastructure will also help ensure the growth of a vibrant economy in Clackamas County.

LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

N/A

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:

To date, the following outreach efforts have been completed:

- Content updates/content audit to WES and District websites (on-going)
- Social Media posts to twitter and facebook about committee meetings and solids handling issue
- Re-introduction of district online panels (7400 members)
- Updated GovDelivery subscribers with same content of newsletter
- Distributed E-newsletter stories (August, September)
- Procured WES service area billing routes/addresses for Gladstone, Milwaukie, Oregon City and West Linn
- Mailed WES Newsletter to 50,000+ CCSD/TCSO customers (on doorsteps first week in Dec.)
- Producing 3 minute video on capacity investment for Web and social media
- Opinion research, survey and report
- Citizen News articles including Krupp's Corner

- Distributed Don Krupp Op-Ed to Pamplin Media/Mtn. Times/Happy Valley Monthly
- Created “overview” fact sheet regarding solids handling capacity issues
- Regular government affairs meetings with local representatives
- Submitted Oregon Consensus application to assist with governance issues
- Meet with local media reporters to discuss issues

OPTIONS:

N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

2015 DHM survey of WES Customers in TCSD and CCSD#1
WES Newsletter

SUBMITTED BY:

Division Director/Head Approval _____

Department Director/Head Approval s/Gary Schmidt

County Administrator Approval _____

For information on this issue or copies of attachments, please contact Gary Schmidt @ 503-742-5908
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PREPARED FOR:

CLACKAMAS COUNTY WATER ENVIRONMENT SERVICES

Customer Telephone Survey

October 2015

PREPARED BY:

DHM RESEARCH

(503) 220-0575 • 239 NW 13th Ave., #205, Portland, OR 97209 • www.dhmresearch.com

1. | INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. (DHM Research) conducted a telephone survey of Clackamas County Water Environment Services (WES) residential customers to assess their awareness and attitudes toward updating the sewer system in Clackamas County. Research findings will help service providers make critical decisions about improving the system and services to customers.

Research Methodology: Between October 8th and 11th, 2015, DHM Research conducted a telephone survey of 400 residential sewer customers in the Tri-City District and Clackamas County Service District 1. This is a sufficient sample size to assess residents' opinions generally and to review findings by multiple subgroups, including gender, age, and other demographics. The survey took an average of 10 minutes to administer.

Customers were contacted through a randomly generated list of residents in the Tri-City District and Clackamas County Service District 1. In gathering responses, a variety of quality control measures were employed, including questionnaire pre-testing and validation. Quotas were set by age, gender, and service district based on the total population of all residential sewer customers for a representative sample.

Statement of Limitations: Any sampling of opinions or attitudes is subject to a margin of error, which represents the difference between a sample of a given population and the total population (here, EWEB residential water customers). For a sample size of 400 the margin of error is +/- 4.9%.

The plus-minus error margin represents differences between the sample and total population at a confidence interval, or probability, calculated to be 95%. This means that there is a 95% probability that the sample taken for this study would fall within the stated margins of error if compared with the results achieved from surveying the entire population.

DHM Research: Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc. has been providing opinion research and consultation throughout Oregon and the rest of the Pacific Northwest for close to 40 years. The firm is non-partisan and independent and specializes in research projects to support community planning and public policy-making. www.dhmresearch.com

2. | SUMMARY & OBSERVATIONS

Clackamas County customers report a high quality of life.

- 98% of the customers polled in Clackamas County say their quality of life is “very good” or “good.”
- When asked about the most important issues facing Clackamas County, customers are likely to mention the major issues that affect the state overall, such as jobs, transportation, and education. The fact that no single issue sticks out indicates that customers are not overly concerned with any issue in their community. Only a handful of customers mentioned water or sewer as an issue (2%).

Customers in Clackamas County are very happy with their sewer service and report few complaints.

- 94% of customers report that their sewer service is “very good” or “good.”
 - Many utilities see customer satisfaction ratings in the mid 80% to 90%. Utilities often experience drops in satisfaction during large or continuous rate increases.
- This high level of satisfaction is likely due to the fact that 85% of customers reported that they do not experience any problems with their service.

Most customers agree that protecting public health and the environment are equally important, and that those concerns must be balanced with cost.

- 94% of customers said it was “very important” or “somewhat important” to balance the needs of public health, the environment, and cost.
- 94% of customers also say that protecting public health was a “very good” or “good” reason to support updating the sewer system in Clackamas County.
- Furthermore, 93% say protecting the environment, such as rivers, streams, and natural areas, is a “very good” or “good” reason to support updating the system.

Customers are open to paying between \$5-\$11 more per month to update their sewer service.

- Customers understand the importance of reliable sewer service and are willing to pay a little bit more to ensure continued, high-level service.
- Most customers report feeling comfortable with a monthly rate increase of between \$5 and \$11.

Customers trust scientists and experts for information about the sewer system more than politicians and big business. And they prefer a variety of ways to get information.

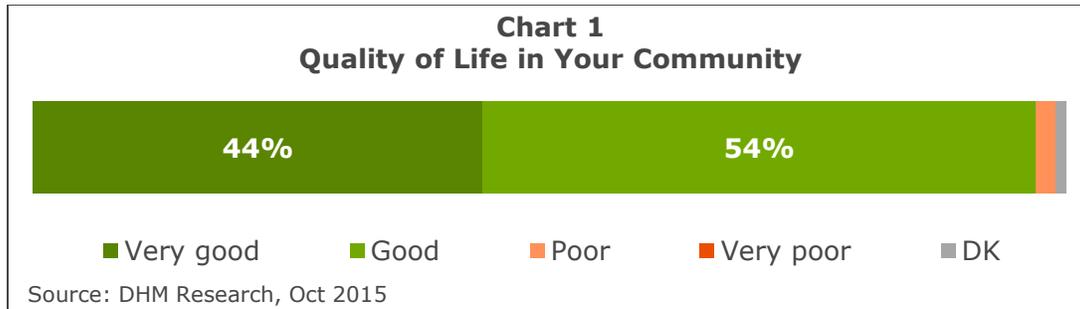
- When it comes to credible sources of information, customers much prefer technical experts, like engineers and regulatory agencies, over generalists, like politicians and big businesses.
 - Seventy-four percent (74%) of customers said that state and federal regulatory agencies were a credible source of information, compared to 48% for local elected officials.

- The most preferred method of learning about changes to the sewer system is directly on the utility bill (81%). Other top sources include:
 - Local news (78%)
 - Newspaper (74%)
 - Digital newsletter (74%)
 - Website (68%)
- 43% of customers think using social media to convey information is a good method.

3. | KEY FINDINGS

3.1 | General Mood

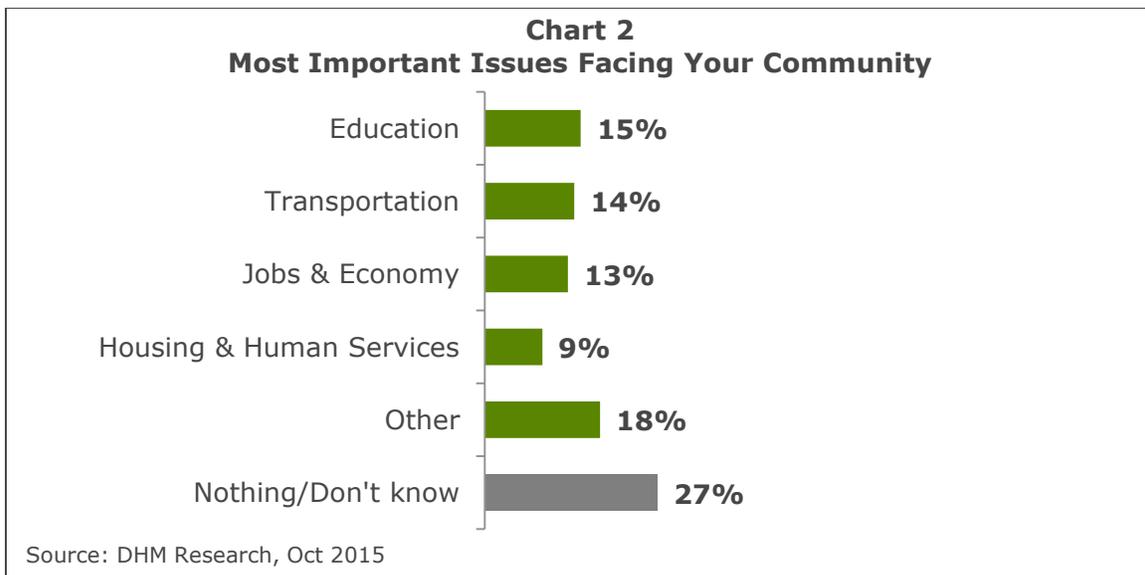
Customers were asked about the quality of life in their community. (Q1)



Residents in small communities often report that they are satisfied with their quality of life. Customers in Clackamas County are no exception; 98% said their quality of life is “good” or “very good.” Only 2% of customers reported their quality of life as “poor.”

Demographic Differences: There are no significant differences.

What do customers see as the most important issue facing Clackamas County? (Q2)



The chart above shows that no single issue sticks out to customers in Clackamas County; rather, most customers identified some of the major issues that affect people across the state, like education, transportation, and the economy.

Demographic Differences: Younger customers, ages 18 to 34, were more likely to cite affordable housing as the biggest issue facing the county, while customers in the next age bracket (35-54) were more likely to focus on the economy and Oregon schools. Customers ages 55 and above were more likely to cite issues related to government and leadership.

3.2 | Water Provider Awareness & Satisfaction

Customers were asked whether they knew who provided their sewer service. (Q3)

Table 1
Which Agency/Agencies Provide(s) Your Sewer Service?

Response Category	N=400
WES/Water Environment Services	14%
Oregon City	10%
City/City services – general	10%
West Linn	8%
Clackamas County	8%
Sunrise	4%
All other responses	2% or less
Other	2%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	29%

Source: DHM Research, Oct 2015

The table above illustrates that most customers knew that their sewer service is provided by a local, public entity, such as their county or city. Of customers in Oregon City, over half (52%) of customers named Oregon City or the city generally as their provider. This pattern was true for customers living in other cities within the Tri-City District as well; 60% of West Linn customers named “the city” or “West Linn” as their sewer provider, and 56% of Gladstone residents named “the city” or “Gladstone” as their provider.

However, a third (29%) of all residents weren’t sure who provided sewer service in the community.

Demographic Differences: Customers living in Clackamas (97015) and Happy Valley (97086) were the most likely to say they didn’t know who provided their service, with 39% and 35% unsure, respectively. Eighteen percent (18%) of Clackamas customers and 11% of Happy Valley customers incorrectly identified Sunrise as their sewer provider.

Are customers happy with their sewer service? (Q4)



Responses show that, yes, customers are happy with their sewer service. Nearly everyone, 94%, said their sewer service was “good” or “very good.” Only a small percentage rated service as “poor” (2%) or “very poor” (1%). It’s common to see higher positive ratings for sewer service than negative ratings – other research conducted by DHM shows utility customers mostly gauge satisfaction around reliability of service.

What factors impact customer satisfaction? (Q5)

Responses show that a lack of problems related to their service is the main reason customers are satisfied. However, for the very small number of customers who are dissatisfied, cost or a disruption in service or other event are to blame.

Base: Those who provided a response of “very good” to Q4.

Response Category	N=164
No problems/issues/good service	92%
Affordable	4%
Good water quality	3%
Well-maintained	2%
Expensive/raised rates	2%
All other responses	1% or less
Other	1%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	0%

Base: Those who provided a response of “good” to Q4.

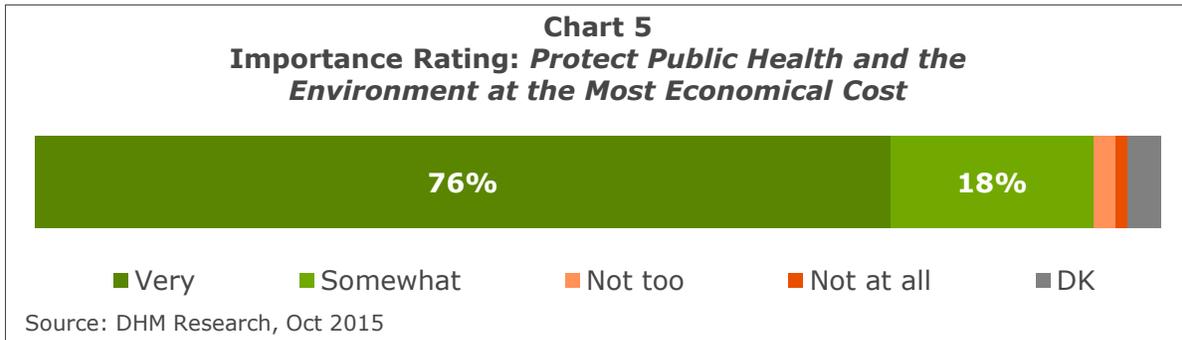
Response Category	N=212
No problems/issues/good service	89%
Expensive/raised rates	6%
Affordable	3%
Good water quality	1%
Dependable/reliable	1%
Damaged by floods/storm runoff	1%
Old system	1%
High pressure problems	1%
Other	1%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	3%

Base: Those who provided a response of “poor” or “very poor” to Q4.

Response Category	N=11
Expensive/raised rates	46%
Damaged by floods/storm runoff	19%
Unreliable	10%
Had backups	9%
No problems/issues/good service	8%
Other	8%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	0%

Demographic Differences: There were no significant differences.

Customers want their utility provider to balance public health, environmental concerns, and cost. (Q6)

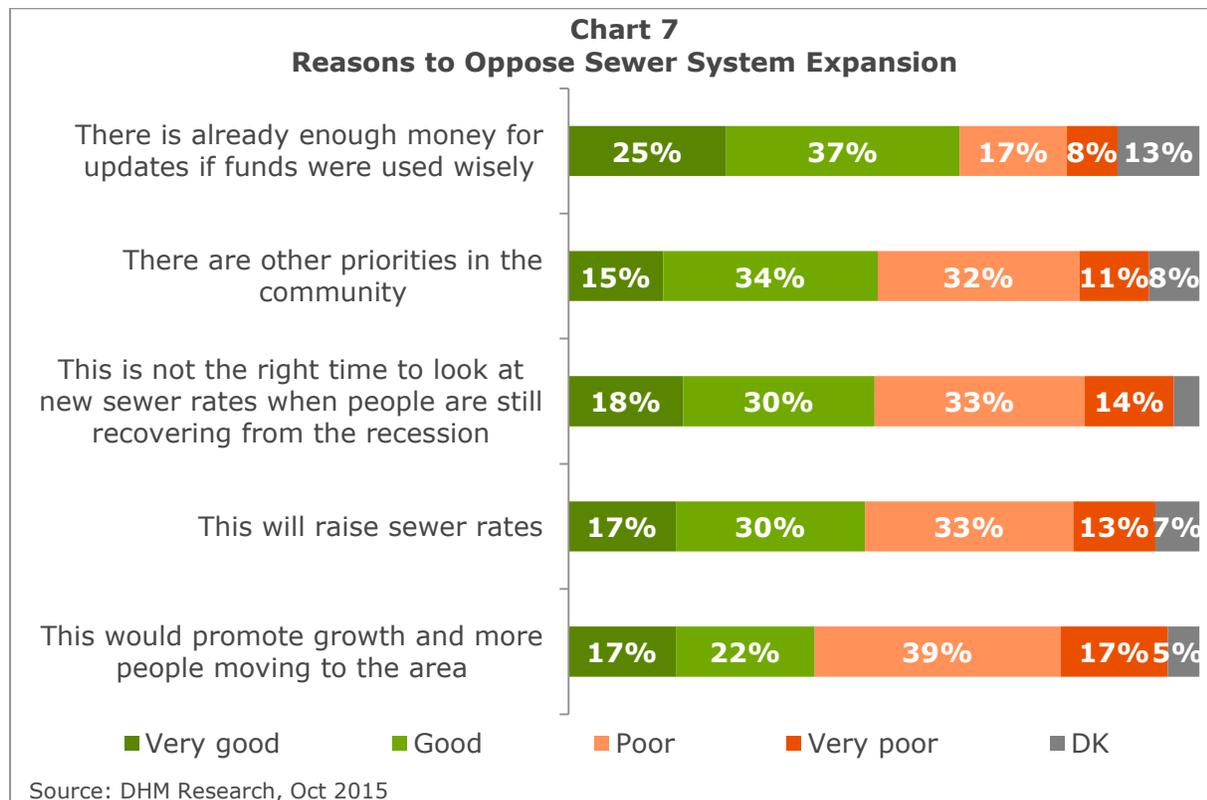
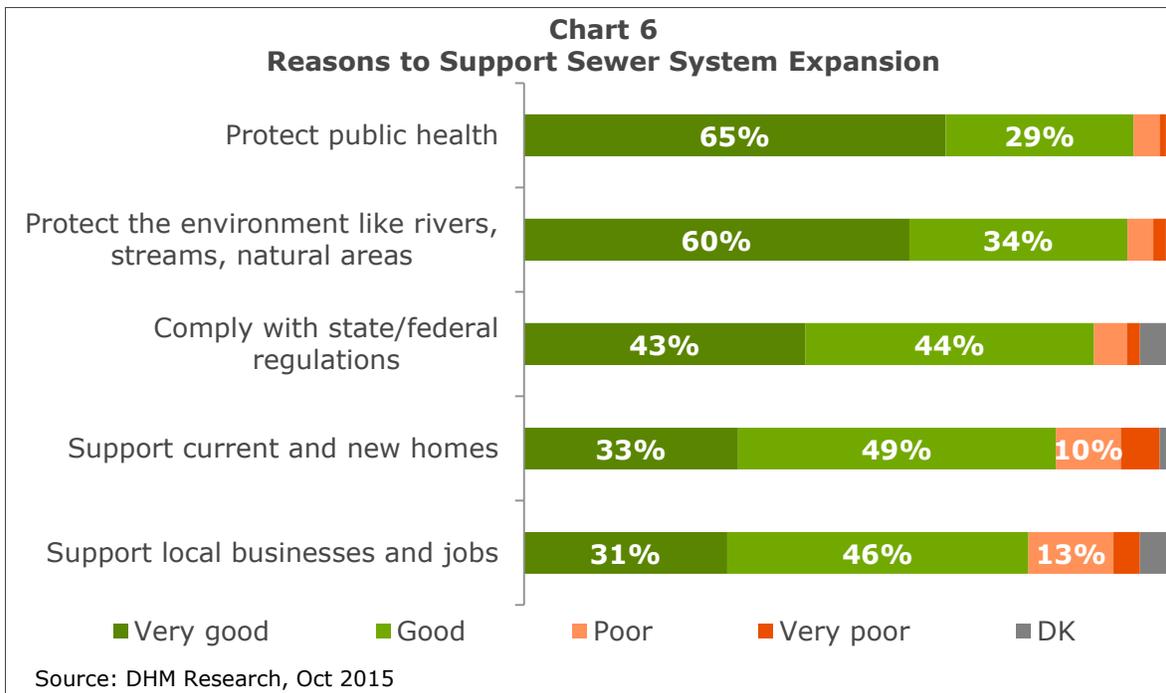


Almost all customers said it was “very important” or “somewhat important” that their sewer service provider “protect public health and the environment at the most economical cost” (94%). Other research conducted by DHM shows customers want the protection of the natural environment from their utility and to have reasonable rates – many customers in the Northwest expect both.

Demographic Differences: All populations of customers said that protecting public health and the environmental at an economical cost was important. However, customers who gave their sewer provider higher ratings were a bit more likely than the rest to say it was “very important.”

3.3 | Support for Sewer Expansion

Customers were asked about the following reasons to support or oppose a sewer system expansion. (Q7-Q16)



Overall, customers responded positively to the variety of reasons to support sewer expansion. Protecting public health and the environment were rated the best reasons to support such an expansion. It's worth noting that customers were just asked about the protection of public health and the environment in a prior question, which may have skewed some opinions.

Customers were not as persuaded by the reasons given to oppose sewer expansion. Although one reason, that there is already enough money for updates, did garner majority support (62%), it did not test as well as any of the reasons to support expansion.

Demographic Differences: Young customers were more receptive to concerns about the environment than customers in older age groups, while customers 55 and over were slightly more likely to respond to the message that an expansion would raise rates (50% vs. 45% in younger age groups). Men were also more likely to give a higher rating to the reason that said there is already enough money to make these changes.

3.4 | Attitudes Toward Rates

Customers were asked about their sewer service rates and about their tolerance for a rate increase. (Q17-Q18)

Table 2
Monthly Amount for Sewer Service

Response Category	N=400
Mean	\$54.70
Median	\$50.00

Source: DHM Research, Oct 2015

The table above shows that customers estimated their average sewer rates at about \$55 per month, with a median of \$50.

Table 3
Amount Willing to Pay for Update to Sewer System

Response Category	N=400
Mean	\$11.10
Median	\$5.00

Source: DHM Research, Oct 2015

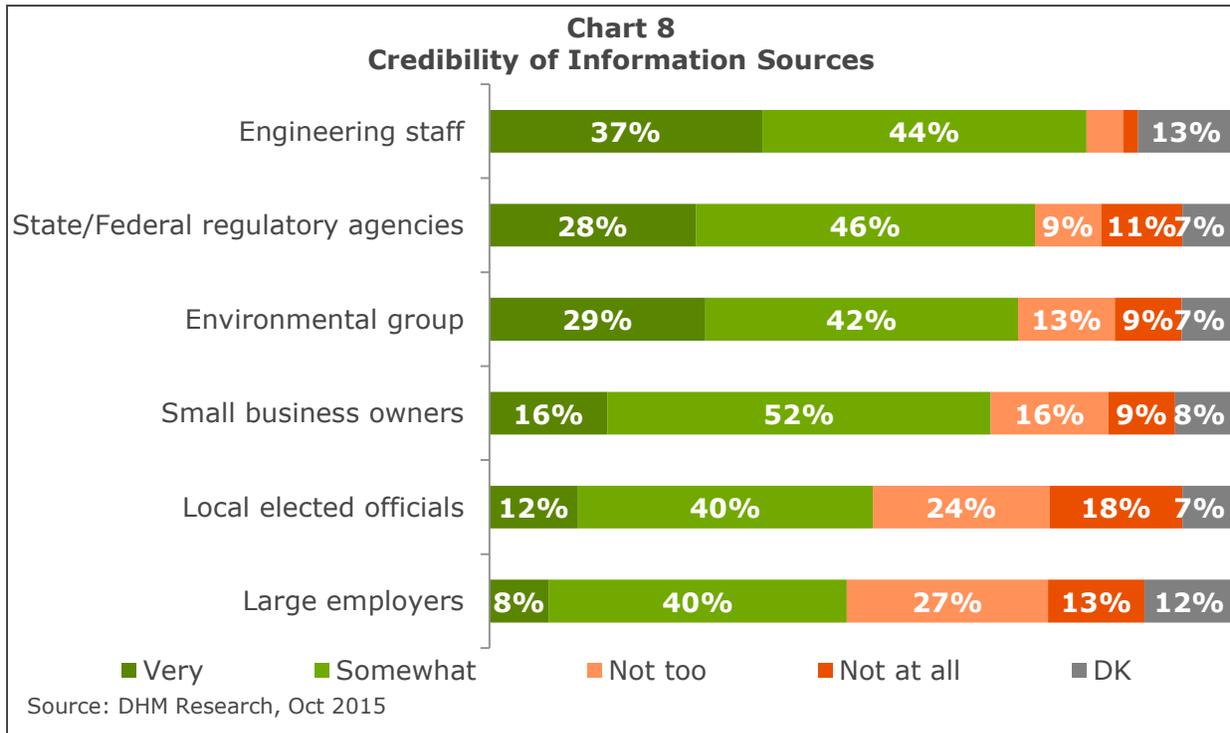
This table shows that most customers reported that they would tolerate an increase of about \$5 to \$10 per month.

Demographic Differences: Customers who have lived in Clackamas County for less than 5 years, on average, estimated their sewer bill to be much higher. For newer residents, the average estimate was \$72.10 per month, compared to \$57.40 for customers that have lived in the county for six to ten years, and \$51.30 for customers that have in the county for over ten years. Conversely, the average additional cost newer residents were willing to pay was higher than other customers. New residents, on average, said they would pay \$29.10 extra per month, compared to just \$8.40 per month for long-time residents. It is important to note however, that these are averages. There is little noticeable difference if only the median is considered.

Tolerance for increased rates, on average, decreased with age. Young customers (18-34) were willing to pay an extra \$17.40 per month. Customers ages 35-54 said they would shoulder an average of \$11.20 extra per month, and those 55 and older said \$6.10 per month was tolerable.

3.5 | Messengers and Sources of Information

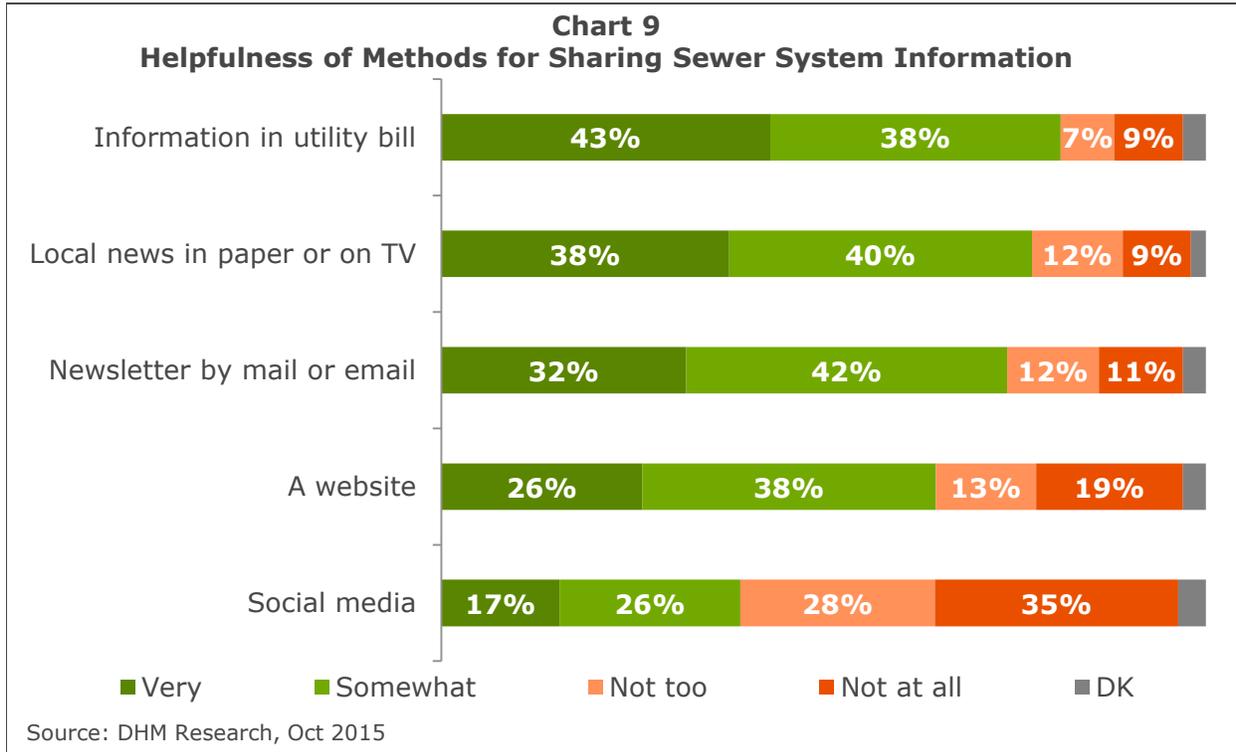
Who do customers really listen to in their community about their sewer system? (Q19-Q24)



Generally speaking, customers said they were more likely to trust experts working in a technical field than generalists or politicians. The most trusted voices are engineers, followed by regulatory agencies. The only group that was not seen as credible by at least half of all customers was large employers, with 48% credibility. Local elected officials scraped by with 52% credibility.

Demographic Differences: Younger customers were more likely to trust local engineers, regulatory agencies, environmental groups, and local elected officials more than older counterparts. For each of these sources of information, credibility ratings declined with each age group. For example, while 59% of customers ages 18-34 said local elected officials were “very credible” or “somewhat credible,” that number dropped to 57% for customers ages 35-54, and just 40% for customers over 55.

Customers rely on a variety of information sources. (Q25-Q29)



Most customers said it is helpful to list information about their sewer system right on their utility bill (81%). But most customers also said local news (78%), newsletters (74%) and websites (64%) are helpful. Only social media was perceived as unhelpful, at 43%.

Demographic Differences: Customers of all ages agreed that information directly on their utility bill was helpful (18-34: 81%; 35-54: 71%; 55+: 82%). All age groups also agreed that information presented in the local news is helpful (18-34: 77%; 35-54: 78%; 55+: 77%), as is a paper or digital newsletter (18-34: 77%; 35-54: 71%; 55+: 75%).

But older customers found modern methods of information delivery, such as websites and social media, less helpful. Less than half of customers 55 and over (46%) said that a website would be helpful, compared to 71% of customers 35-54 and 81% of customers 18-34. Even fewer customers 55 and over said social media would be helpful, at 29%, compared to 45% of customer 35-54 and 64% of customers 18-34.

APPENDIX A

Clackamas County Water Environment Services October 8-11, 2015; N=400, residents ages 18+ 10 minutes; margin of error +/- 4.9% DHM Research + Barney & Worth

Introduction

Hi, my name is ___ with DHM Research. This is not a sales call and I'm not selling anything. We are asking residents in your area about issues that are important to the community.

- Overall, do you feel the quality of life in your community is very good, good, poor, or very poor?

Response Category	N=400
Very good	44%
Good	54%
Poor	2%
Very poor	0%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	1%

- What are the most important issues you see facing your community at this time?
(Open, probe for specific comments)

Response Category	N=400
None/Nothing/No problems	18%
Education/Schools/Funding/Overcrowding	15%
Jobs/Economy	10%
Traffic/Congestion	8%
Roads/Street repairs/Infrastructure	6%
Crime/Drugs	5%
Government/Leadership	5%
Growth/Development	5%
Taxes/High taxes	5%
Affordable housing	5%
Homelessness/Poverty/Mental health	4%
Environmental issues	3%
Other	3%
All other responses	2% or less
(DON'T READ) Don't know	9%

- Which agency or agencies provide sewer service for your home? **(OPEN)**

Response Category	N=400
WES/Water Environment Services	14%
Oregon City	10%
City/City services - general	10%
West Linn	8%
Clackamas County	8%
Sunrise	4%
All other responses	2% or less
Other	2%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	29%

4. Would you rate your sewer service as very good, good, poor, or very poor?

Response Category	N=400
Very good	41%
Good	53%
Poor	2%
Very poor	1%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	3%

5. Why do you rate the service as (response above)?

a. **Base:** Those who provided a response of "Very good" to Q4

Response Category	N=164
No problems/issues/good service	92%
Affordable	4%
Good water quality	3%
Well-maintained	2%
Expensive/raised rates	2%
All other responses	1% or less
Other	1%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	0%

b. **Base:** Those who provided a response of "Good" to Q4

Response Category	N=212
No problems/issues/good service	89%
Expensive/raised rates	6%
Affordable	3%
Good water quality	1%
Dependable/reliable	1%
Damaged by floods/storm runoff	1%
Old system	1%
High pressure problems	1%
Other	1%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	3%

c. **Base:** Those who provided a response of "Poor" or "Very poor" to Q4

Response Category	N=11
Expensive/raised rates	46%
Damaged by floods/storm runoff	19%
Unreliable	10%
Had backups	9%
No problems/issues/good service	8%
Other	8%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	0%

6. Considering sewer service in your area, how important is it to *protect public health and the environment at the most economical cost*? Do you believe it is very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?

Response Category	N=400
Very important	76%
Somewhat important	18%
Not too important	2%
Not at all important	1%
(DON'T READ) Don't know	3%

The sewer system in the community is running out of space to treat any additional sewage. The existing plant meets all permit standards, however, the sewer system needs to be expanded and upgraded to better accommodate current and future needs. **(Rotate between support and oppose.)**

I'd like to read some reasons to support updating the sewer system in the community. For each, please tell me if you believe it is a very good reason, good, poor, or very poor reason to update the sewer system. **(Randomize)**

Response Category	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	Don't know
7. Protect public health	65%	29%	4%	1%	1%
8. Protect the environment like rivers, streams, and natural areas	60%	34%	4%	2%	1%
9. Comply with state and federal regulations	43%	44%	5%	2%	5%
10. Support local businesses and jobs	31%	46%	13%	4%	5%
11. Support current and new homes	33%	49%	10%	6%	2%

I'd like to read some reasons to oppose updating the sewer system in the community. For each, please tell me if you believe it is a very good reason, good, poor, or very poor reason to oppose updating the sewer system. **(Randomize)**

Response Category	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	Don't know
12. There are other priorities in the community	15%	34%	32%	11%	8%
13. This would promote growth and more people moving to the area	17%	22%	39%	17%	5%
14. This will raise sewer rates	17%	30%	33%	13%	7%
15. There is already enough money for updates to the system if funds were used wisely	25%	37%	17%	8%	13%
16. This is not the right time to look at new sewer rates when people are still recovering from the recession	18%	30%	33%	14%	4%

17. How much do you pay per month for sewer service to your home? A rough estimate is fine. **(Record dollar amount, open)**

Response Category	N=400
Mean	54.70
Median	50.00

18. How much more would you be willing to pay per month to update the sewer system in your community? **(Record dollar amount, open)**

Response Category	N=400
Mean	11.10
Median	5.00

When it comes to information about the sewer system in the community, please let me know if you find the following to be very credible, somewhat credible, not too credible, or not at all credible source. **(Randomize)**

Response Category	Very credible	Smwt credible	Not too credible	Not at all credible	Don't know
19.Small business owner	16%	52%	16%	9%	8%
20.Large employer	8%	40%	27%	13%	12%
21.Local elected official	12%	40%	24%	18%	7%
22.Engineering staff	37%	44%	5%	2%	13%
23.Environmental group	29%	42%	13%	9%	7%
24.State and federal regulatory agencies	28%	46%	9%	11%	7%

I'd like to read some ways to share information about the sewer system. For each, please let me know if that type of information is very helpful, somewhat helpful, not too helpful, or not at all helpful to you. **(Randomize)**

Response Category	Very helpful	Smwt helpful	Not too helpful	Not at all helpful	Don't know
25.A website	26%	38%	13%	19%	3%
26. Newsletter by mail or emailed to you	32%	42%	12%	11%	3%
27.Social media	17%	26%	17%	35%	4%
28. Local news in the paper or on TV	38%	40%	12%	9%	2%
29.Information in your utility bill	43%	38%	7%	9%	3%

These final few questions make sure we have a representative sample of the community. All of the information is confidential and cannot identify you.

30. Age

Response Category	N=400
18-24	11%
25-34	14%
35-54	37%
55-64	14%
65+	24%
(DON'T READ) Refused	0%

31. How many years have you lived in Clackamas County? **(OPEN)**

Response Category	N=400
0-5 years	10%
6-10 years	16%
More than 10 years	71%
(DON'T READ) Refused	4%

32. **(DO NOT ASK, by observation)** Gender

Response Category	N=400
Male	48%
Female	52%

33. **(DO NOT ASK, from sample)** Zip code

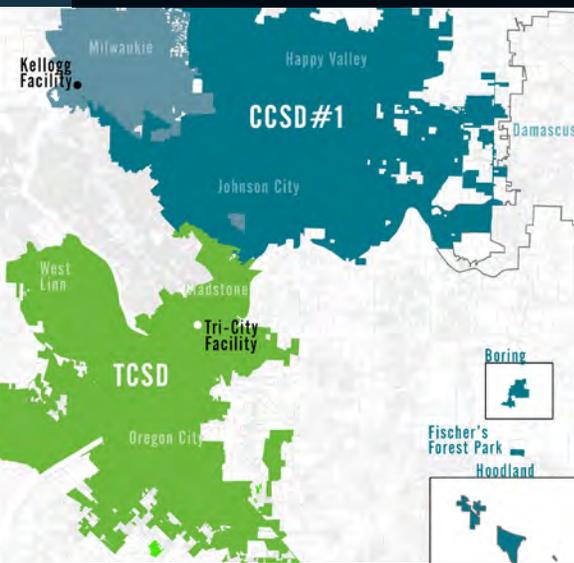
Response Category	N=400
97015	11%
97027	5%
97045	25%
97067	1%
97068	20%
97086	20%
97089	3%
97206	1%
97222	5%
97267	9%
(DON'T READ) Refused	0%

34. **(DO NOT ASK, from sample)** Service District

Response Category	N=400
Clack. County Service District #1	50%
Tri-City Service District	50%



Pictured above is a WES engineering staff member educating young residents about the treatment process. A digester is a closed container where bacteria decompose solids, which are byproducts of sewage from homes and businesses. Solids handling is a critical step in the wastewater treatment process.



The districts use physical, biological and chemical treatment to clean more than 15 million gallons of wastewater from houses and businesses each day. Following the treatment process, cleaned water is released from district facilities into the Willamette and Sandy rivers. Maintaining a wastewater treatment system that is reliable and highly functioning is essential for protecting public health, keeping rivers healthy, and allowing the economy to thrive.

Protecting public health and the environment at the most economical cost

Clackamas County Water Environment Services (WES) serves the Tri-City Service District (TCSD) and Clackamas County Service District No. 1 (CCSD#1) by providing high-quality wastewater treatment services to 150,000 homes and businesses.

CCSD#1 provides services to unincorporated areas of North Clackamas County, the cities of Happy Valley and Milwaukie, the western edges of Damascus, and the communities of Boring, Fischer's Forest Park, and the Hoodland area. CCSD#1's wastewater is treated at multiple facilities including Boring, Fischer's Forest Park, Hoodland, the Kellogg facility in Milwaukie, and the Tri-City facility in Oregon City.

TCSD provides wastewater treatment services at the Tri-City facility in Oregon City for the cities of Gladstone, Oregon City and West Linn, each of which are responsible for their own collection systems as well as billing customers for services. In addition to the treatment rate charged by the district, each of the cities charges their own additional fees for their local collection systems.

More capacity is needed to process solids

After 30 years of excellent service—now serving a population that has more than doubled—the Tri-City plant has exceeded its capacity to handle solids. This faster-than-expected growth combined with aging equipment has put a significant strain on our shared wastewater treatment system.

Our digesters, which play an important role in the solids handling process, are at a high risk of failure. If the system fails before capacity is added, public and environmental health would be at risk.

The most cost-effective solution to the problem is an equitable co-investment by both districts to build additional solids handling capacity at the Tri-City facility for the districts to share.

Treating wastewater is a regional effort

Although the districts were formed as separate entities, they've worked together over the years to provide the best service possible while saving ratepayers money. The districts have a history of partnering to pay for significant facility improvements and the costs associated with meeting stringent water quality regulations. This collaboration has saved millions of dollars for each district and their customers.

Advisory committees guide policy and investment decisions

CCSD#1 and TCSD are governed by the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners (BCC). As the governing body for both districts, the BCC sets policies that are carried out by WES.

Each district has an appointed advisory committee composed of local representatives, which provides valuable input and recommendations on policy and budget issues to the BCC.



In addition to district-specific committees, the Regional Wastewater Treatment Capacity Advisory Committee is a coalition of regional partners represented by the cities of Damascus, Gladstone, Happy Valley, Milwaukie, Oregon City, West Linn, and portions of unincorporated Clackamas County. The BCC has asked these jurisdictions to work together to develop a timely solution for the shortage of solids handling capacity. This will ensure dependable, high-quality, cost-effective wastewater treatment services to both districts' residents and businesses.

All advisory committee meetings are open to the public. Meeting materials and video recordings are posted online at clackamas.us/wes

Stay Involved and Learn More

The Regional Wastewater Treatment Capacity Advisory Committee will meet Thursday, Dec. 10 at 6:30 p.m. in Room 115 of the Clackamas County Development Services Building at 150 Beavercreek Road in Oregon City. The main item on the agenda will be a decision regarding co-investment by TCSD and CCSD#1 in a project to increase solids handling capacity at the Tri-City Plant in Oregon City. The public is welcome to attend and may provide comment in person or email at wesoutreach@clackamas.us

Visit clackamas.us/wes

Attend an advisory committee meeting or watch a video recording online

Request a presentation

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Sign up for the monthly eNewsletter that includes WES news



150 Beavercreek Road
Oregon City, OR 97045

Join us at the Regional Wastewater Capacity Advisory Committee Meeting on Dec. 10

PLEASE JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

WATER IS VALUABLE
We treat it that way



The Tri-City facility, serving the Tri-City Service District and Clackamas County Service District No. 1, is a model of social, economic and environmental sustainability. It recycles energy, reuses water, and produces some of the cleanest treated water in the country.

Water is our most valuable natural resource. We treat it that way.

clackamas.us/wes