



Water Solutions, Inc.

February 7, 2020

Executive Summary

Water Rights Strategy for Partner Water Providers

I. Introduction

GSI Water Solutions, Inc. (GSI) is assisting the Partner Water Providers (Partners) to develop a water rights strategy. The Partners include the Cities of Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Jacksonville, Phoenix, and Talent (jointly the Partner Cities) and Medford Water Commission (MWC).¹ In early 2019, the Partners signed a Cooperative Agreement to develop the strategy recognizing the benefits of mutual cooperation and the vital importance of providing source water to their respective customers for public health, safety and welfare, and for sustaining economic development.

The water rights strategy focuses on the Partners' water rights and water supply associated with the MWC Duff Water Treatment Plant (Duff WTP) on the Rogue River. During the months of May through September (peak season), much of the MWC's water supply and all of the Partner Cities' water supply is treated at the Duff WTP. During this peak season period, the Partner Cities currently rely on water rights they have obtained and hold Treat and Transport agreements with the MWC.

As the Partners plan for their long-term water supply needs, it is important that they have a full understanding of the status of their water rights and develop a common strategy to protect and secure them. The water rights strategy is intended to meet those needs.

II. Process

To develop the water rights strategy, GSI initially prepared a comprehensive water rights summary, which enabled the Partners to develop a shared understanding of the water rights at the Duff WTP. Next, GSI developed a consolidated water demand projection for each of the Partners, which included the maximum anticipated demands for the years 2030, 2040 and 2070. GSI then compared the Partners' individual and collective demands with their water rights. This evaluation showed that some of the Partners' water rights will likely provide them with sufficient supply past the year 2070, while other Partners' water rights do not provide sufficient water supply to meet current demands. The evaluation also showed that if the Partners shared their water supplies, they would have sufficient supply to meet all of their demands through 2070.

¹ MWC's customers include customers within the City of Medford, White City, Elk City and Charlotte Ann Water Districts, as well as other customers served by MWC outside of its service area (Outside Customers).

III. Goals, Interests and Priorities for Water Rights Strategy

The above-described differences between the Partners' water rights and projected water demands demonstrate the value of a strategy related to the Partner water rights at the Duff WTP. The strategy is intended to meet the following goals, interests, and priorities:

- Ensure that the water rights at the Duff WTP are strategically managed.
- Secure a long-term water supply for all Partners.
- Eliminate the need for Partners to unnecessarily purchase additional water rights.
- Retain each Partners' ownership of its existing water rights and create opportunities to obtain value for the water rights.
- Treat White City, Elk City and Charlotte Ann Water Districts, and other customers served by MWC outside of its service area (Outside Customers) equitably.

IV. Strategic Management of Partners' Existing Water Rights

A. Reasons for Developing Coordinated Approach to Water Rights and Water Use

GSI recommends that the Partners consider developing a coordinated approach to managing their water rights and water supply. This coordination could include not only coordinated management of the water rights at the Duff WTP, but also creation of an opportunity for the Partners to share their combined water supplies. Coordination will also be necessary to strategically secure the 20 existing water rights at the Duff WTP. Additionally, if the Partners established a combined water supply, it could address the imbalances between water rights and projected water demands that have been previously described, and eliminate the need for the purchase of additional water rights to meet their individual needs. Further, establishing a combined water supply could provide the Partners with some level of supply redundancy; that is, the arrangement could enable each Partner to obtain water from more than one source of supply.

B. Conceptual Framework for Water Supply Sharing

GSI and the Partners considered multiple approaches to sharing water supply. Based on GSI's understanding of the Partners' goals, interests, and priorities, as well as the Partners' water supplies and demands, GSI recommended an approach that provides an opportunity to meet the Partners' near-term and long-term goals without jeopardizing any of the Partners' water rights. In addition, the Partners would pool their water rights to establish a diverse water rights portfolio.

Under the recommended option, the Partner Cities and MWC would enter into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to work together on regional water supply. The IGA would describe how the water rights and water supply would be shared, which would occur in two phases. Until the Duff WTP capacity was expanded to 100 cfs in approximately 2028, the Partner Cities and the Outside Customers would share their water supplies. MWC could track

each entity's water use and compare that with the entity's individual water rights to determine whether any compensation was required for use of another entity's water rights. Additionally, the Partners would follow an agreed-upon strategy to request water right certificates for their water rights.

In the second phase of this option, the MWC would modify its agreements with the Partner Cities and Outside Customers and would begin to provide them with surplus water. The water rights held by the MWC and the Partner Cities would be placed into a regional water supply pool, which would be managed by the MWC. This would result in the Partners having a diverse water supply portfolio. The Partner Cities would retain ownership of their water rights, and the IGA would include a mechanism by which any of the Partner Cities could withdraw from the group.

The MWC would compensate the Partner Cities for any Operation and Management (O&M) costs it incurred associated with contracts for stored water that was being used by the Partners. The MWC would also provide Partner Cities with compensation (based on negotiations between each Partner City and the MWC) for water rights used by the Partners. The rate the Partner Cities pay to the MWC would reflect these expenses.

V. Summary of Recommended Option

The option recommended by GSI provides an approach to meeting the Partners' near-term and long-term water supply goals without jeopardizing any of the Partners' collective water rights. In the near term, the recommended option provides a method for the Partner Cities and MWC on behalf of the Outside Customers to initiate a shared water supply strategy. It then changes relatively quickly to reset the relationship with the MWC, which would then provide surplus water supply to the Partner Cities and Outside Customers. In addition, the Partners would pool their water rights to establish a diverse water rights portfolio. Finally, this option minimizes water rights transactions, such as extensions of time for permits and transfers, and decreases the risks associated with these transactions.

VI. Next Steps

Establishing a water sharing agreement will require completing a series of steps or actions. The following is a brief summary of some of the actions that will be required:

- The Partners' staff communicate with their councils/boards, and seek approval to develop a scope of work to develop an IGA.
- Staff develop the scope of work for drafting the IGA, and take the scope of work to city councils/ board for approval.
- Staff develop a draft IGA.
- Staff take the draft IGA to their city councils/board for review and approval.