

Longview Drinking Water Improvement Study

Project overview

Updated June 18, 2015

The City of Longview and the Beacon Hill Water & Sewer District (BHWSD) supply drinking water to 45,000 customers in the region. In 2013, due to various upgrades needed to the aging system that was in place, the water supply was switched from a surface water source treated at the Fishers Lane Water Treatment Plant to a groundwater source treated at the Mint Farm Water Treatment Plant. While the new system provides water that meets all water safety and quality standards, a recent customer survey found that a large majority of water users (82%) are dissatisfied with their water.



Fishers Lane Water Treatment Plant (left) provided treated water from the Cowlitz River until 2013; the Mint Farm Water Treatment Plant (right) currently supplies treated groundwater

In response, the City of Longview and BHWSD initiated a study to evaluate options for improving water quality. This included establishing a Customer Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC's objective is to **provide recommendations for a sustainable, safe, and satisfactory water supply for Longview/BHWSD water customers.**

Common concerns

The most common issues expressed by water customers include:

- Spots and residue
- Taste
- Color and staining
- Smell
- Indirect costs to customers, including damage to appliances and buying bottled water
- Fear of health impacts

The new groundwater supply has higher dissolved silica and hardness, which can cause spotting and mineral buildup on appliances and fixtures. The study is considering options to remove dissolved silica and reduce the hardness of the water.

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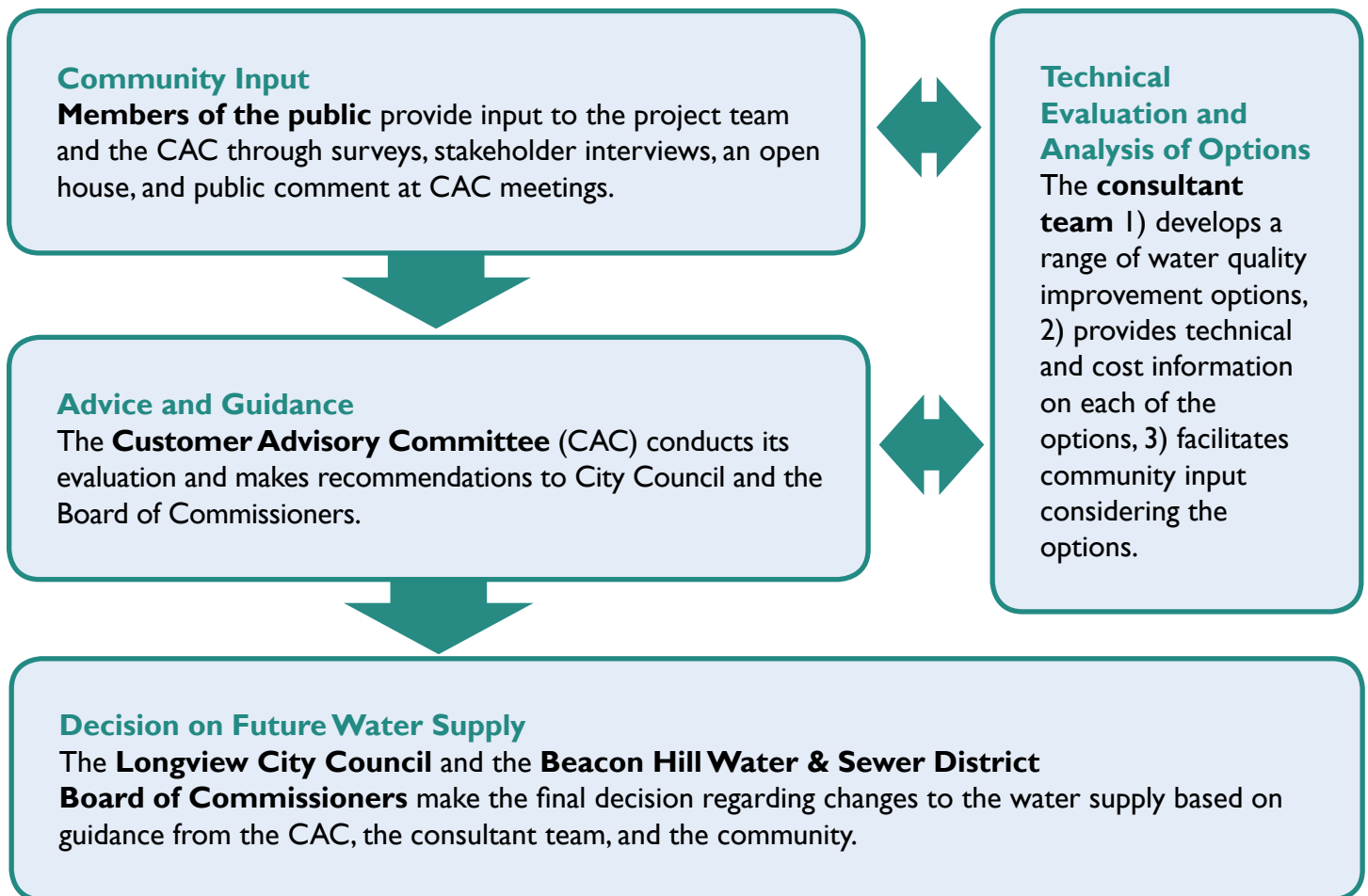
Illustration from the Customer Advisory Committee kick-off meeting identifying background on the issues and outlook for the study process

Iron, manganese and chlorine levels contribute to the issues of taste, odor, and color of the water. Levels continue to be monitored in order to ensure safety and quality; however, changing the taste, odor and color characteristics of the drinking water have been a major focus of the study.

While heard less frequently than other issues, there have been reports of the water affecting customers' health. Reports of skin rashes, upset stomachs and other ailments have been attributed to the change in drinking water. The water is regularly monitored and tested and it meets all water safety and quality standards; however, customer complaints are taken seriously and are being considered during the study.

CAC recommendation process

The Longview City Council and the BHWSD Board of Commissioners are responsible for making the final decision regarding changes to the water supply. However, the CAC plays a key role in recommending the best course of action. All parts of the process will be informed by technical information from the project team and feedback from the community.



Evaluation criteria

To help sort through the options, the CAC adopted an evaluation framework that includes community values, customer perspectives, technical considerations and cost. The criteria are grouped under three key values:

- Key Value #1: Improve **customer perception** about the water supply with respect to it being high quality and having no toxic risk. This category includes criteria such as taste, smell, spotting and health concerns.
- Key Value #2: The recommendation should be **technically feasible** and **have long-term viability**. This category includes criteria such as long-term capacity, reliability, operability and permitting considerations.
- Key Value #3: Consider the **cost and affordability** of water, both in terms of rates paid and indirect costs to customers for bottled water, appliance repair, in-home treatment or other similar costs.



Illustration of the vision created by the CAC during their first meeting; this vision is reflected in the CAC's objectives and evaluation criteria

Options considered

The range of possible options came from research by the technical consultant, as well as input from city staff, CAC members and the community. The initial list included more than 50 possible courses of action, which were grouped to make it manageable to consider benefits and drawbacks.

Group of options	Type of change	Source
Stay the course	No change; status quo	Mint Farm wellfield
Modified well source	Change in treatment of the well water or changes in the distribution/transmission system	Mint Farm wellfield
Change to a surface water source	Surface water may be sourced above ground or via a Ranney collector well; and could include Aquifer Storage and Recovery (ASR) or blending surface water with well water	Cowlitz River, Columbia River or other surface water source
Buy water from or collaborate with another entity	Regional/intergovernmental agreement	Cowlitz River, Columbia River or Kalama River
End user treatment	Treatment at the individual home/business level	Mint Farm wellfield
Non-infrastructure	Products and education to deal with water issues	Mint Farm wellfield

Project timeline

The CAC and technical team activities that will lead to recommendations are shown below, along with opportunities for input from the community.

	2014	2015							
	<	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.
CAC activities	Applications for Community Advisory Committee (CAC)	CAC Meeting 1, Jan. 13: Background and charge, community discussion, goals and expectations	CAC Meeting 2, Jan. 31: Finalize chartering, water treatment plant tours	CAC Meeting 3, Feb. 24: Develop values and criteria; review complete set of options and option groups	CAC Meeting 4, Mar. 17: Finalize and prioritize values and criteria	CAC Meetings 5, 6, 7, 8 (Apr. 14; May 19; Jun. 9, Jul. 16) Evaluate options, narrow to top rated options, select preferred alternative			Aug. 20: CAC workshop with Council and District Board
Public input opportunities	Customer phone survey	Public comment period at CAC meetings throughout project							
			Stakeholder interviews & community survey			Open house, online survey & video		Comment period on preferred alternative	
Technical evaluation	Develop options & confirm water needs	Assess Fishers Lane water treatment plant		Evaluate options		Develop top rated options		Document process, results report	

Contact Us

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Go online for more information

The project website and city website contain additional information on Longview’s water supply, including:

- Fact sheets on hard water, iron, manganese and silica
- Customer Advisory Committee meeting dates and information
- Answers to frequently asked questions

www.LongviewWater.org