



THE [E - L i n k]

Connecting Southern Oregon's COG With Its Members

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RVCOG MEMBERS

- Jackson County*
- Josephine County*
- City of Ashland*
- Town of Butte Falls*
- City of Cave Junction*
- City of Central Point*
- City of Eagle Point*
- City of Gold Hill*
- City of Grants Pass*
- City of Jacksonville*
- City of Medford*
- City of Phoenix*
- City of Rogue River*
- City of Shady Cove*
- City of Talent*
- Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District*
- Rogue Community College*
- Rogue Valley Sewer Services*
- Rogue Valley Transportation District*
- Southern Oregon Regional Communications*
- Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc.*
- Southern Oregon University*

RVMPO Holds Goal Setting Session

On July 28, RVMPO (*Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization*) staff held an MPO Goal Setting Session with member jurisdictions in a Policy Committee meeting. Why hold a goal setting session? Although federal regulations for MPOs set general planning requirements (i.e. support economic vitality, address safety, etc.), the specifics as to the total scope of planning efforts and what to emphasize are left up to the local decision makers. This session was an opportunity for the Policy Committee to get into more of those specifics, to step back from day-to-day decision making and, as a group, set some long- and short-term priorities for what the RVMPO should be addressing. This is entirely in keeping with the purpose of the Policy Committee, which, according to the bylaws of the RVMPO, is to "identify transportation policies, issues and needs which are area-wide in scope, and to plan and recommend actions in areas of intergovernmental concern." The July 28 goal setting session was designed to help the Policy Committee develop a common vision and focus to achieve that purpose.



The session was designed around input gathered prior to the event from members of the three RVMPO committees—the Public Advisory Committee (PAC), the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and the Policy Committee. Staff processed the input and distributed the results at the meeting as the basis for the process of creating specific goals. The following draft goals found general agreement:

- Increase citizen participation and involvement in the RVMPO;
- Continue to work toward more fully integrating land use and transportation planning;
- Increase integration and availability of transportation options;
- Expand planning scope to include consideration of the wider transportation-shed;
- Use RVMPO funding strategically to pursue RVMPO goals;
- Incorporate environmental and energy conservation into RVMPO planning process;
- Evaluate potential processes based on best practices in other MPOs.

With the meeting expertly facilitated by Ashland's former mayor (and former policy committee member) John Morrison, committee members worked hard and efficiently to reach agreement on goals. Also formulated were vision and mission statements for the RVMPO as planning for the region's future growth continues.

Saying Goodbye to Jim Hill

Last month, Jim Hill passed from our lives. We, like many of you who knew and worked with Jim, lost not only a respected colleague, but also a cherished friend. His intelligence and dry wit, coupled with his genuine caring for the people and places he touched throughout his life, made him an incredibly special person. Not only could he liven up a room just by walking into it, but Jim was that rare individual who was as well liked as he was respected.

Among so many other things, Jim was a strong advocate and partner with RVCOG. Years ago, Jim allowed RVCOG to use the wastewater treatment plant laboratories to analyze water quality samples taken from local streams. This low-cost partnership, which continues to thrive today, has not only been of great benefit to the entire region, but has been held up as a state-wide example of best collaborative practices. Jim also served on numerous committees for RVCOG, including vernal pools stakeholders, Bear Creek and Rogue River TMDLs, and stream restoration. In all instances, his incisive mind and ability to offer input in a kind, humorous, constructive way made seemingly square pegs fit nicely into round holes. Although one of his tag lines was the self-effacing “that’s just my opinion, and I could be wrong”, he seldom was.



Photo courtesy of City of Medford Engineering Department

But of course, Jim had a great deal more going on in his life than the work he did with us. Terry Buchholz, who served on the board of the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies (ACWA) with Jim, was kind enough to pass along some details about Jim’s personal, professional and community contributions, which we’d like to share with you.

Jim was born on January 16, 1950 in Hawthorne, California. He spent his teenage years in Sacramento and attended the University of California – Davis. After graduating with a degree in environmental engineering, he spent many years in the San Francisco Bay Area, working in the water/wastewater field.

In 1991, Jim moved to the Rogue Valley and began serving as the City of Medford Water Reclamation Administrator. Under Jim’s leadership, Medford was able to achieve and maintain one of the lowest sewer rates in the State of Oregon. In fact, by continuously building additional capacity in small increments without debt financing, Jim helped to ensure that, to this day, Medford’s outstanding debt for sewage treatment facilities is zero.

In the late 1990’s, Jim and other key Upper Rogue Basin stakeholders helped shape the regional water management plan, the Water for Irrigation Streams and Economy program, known as WISE. As Chair of WISE, Jim’s professionalism and dedication helped keep the project moving forward before Congress finally decided to support it (in those days, Jim’s dry wit and humor were especially helpful in keeping the meetings lively and productive at the same time). Jim also served for many years as the southern Oregon representative to ACWA and was serving as Vice Chair at the time of his death. A long-term member of the Bear Creek Watershed Council, Jim also served for years as their Chair. No surprise that Jim’s leadership in crafting innovative solutions, and his desire to achieve the best in wastewater treatment, was a known constant well beyond the boundaries of southern Oregon.

Other parts of our community benefitted from Jim’s giving nature, as well. For several years, he served as a ski host at Mount Ashland and supported community organizations by volunteering for Britt Festivals and the Oregon Cabaret Theatre. It was clear to his family and friends that Jim lived life to the fullest. His fun loving personality, gift for conversation, and his caring ways attracted a host of friends. Jim also loved the outdoors and was an avid sportsman. He enjoyed skiing, tennis, golf, backpacking and hiking. Above all, Jim cherished his time with his children Courtney and Rob, his life partner, Rita, and his many friends.

Jim’s total enthusiasm for every activity he was involved in and interest in everyone he met—not to mention his wicked sense of humor—was a joy to all of us who worked with him. He will be deeply, profoundly missed.

Bacteria...in a Stream Near You

As air temperatures rise, flows diminish, and water is used for irrigation, conditions become well suited for bacteria to flourish in creeks. During the summer, water quality monitoring conducted by RVCOG on behalf of Medford, Ashland, Central Point, Phoenix, Talent, Jacksonville, and Jackson County shows that creeks in the Bear Creek Watershed exceed the standard for contact recreation due to high bacteria levels. Residents are asked to use caution when in

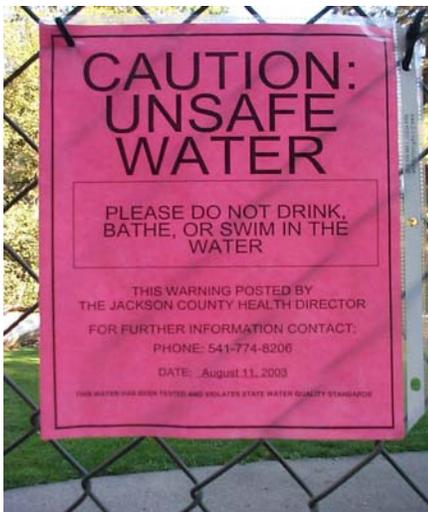


Figure 2.
Turbid (dirty) water quality sample. Sample may contain high pollutant levels including bacteria.

and waterfowl, leaking septic systems, illegal dumping from portable toilets or RVs, and any other activity that discharges fecal matter directly into creeks or storm drains. Storm drains discharge untreated runoff directly

Figure 4:

If water samples from local creeks fail to meet water quality standards, notices are provided to local media outlets and warning signs may be posted by local municipalities.



contact with waterways and especially to avoid ingestion (which may cause illness) and contact with open wounds (which may cause infection).

Very young children should be fully supervised when playing in water to avoid swallowing the water. It is important to note that contact with any water body—creeks, rivers, lakes, or swimming pools—carries some level of risk.

Bacteria can enter the streams from a variety of sources including pet waste, livestock waste, wild animals and waterfowl, leaking septic systems, illegal dumping from portable toilets or RVs, and any other activity that discharges fecal matter directly into creeks or storm drains. Storm drains discharge untreated runoff directly into creeks, so anything emptied into the storm drains gets into creeks.

There are a number of things that residents can do to help reduce bacteria levels in streams, including the following:

- Pick up after your pets.
- Avoid dumping manure, dog waste, kitty litter, portable toilet, RV waste, or other materials in or near creeks or storm drains.
- Have your septic system inspected and repaired if failing.
- Put toddlers in swim diapers.

Find out more. Information is available from the Rogue Valley Council of Governments, [Natural Resources Department](#), and the Oregon Department of Human Services, [Office of Environmental Public Health](#).



Figure 1.
Sampling water from one of many creeks in the Bear Creek Watershed.

Figure 3.

Analyzing water quality samples in lab space donated by the City of Medford's Vernon Thorpe Water Reclamation Facility.



RVCOG's Core Values Defined

While the COG has always operated with a full complement of core values, we had never actually gotten around to putting a name and face to them. We knew what motivated us to do our best, and we hoped that the region would appreciate that, but we had never formalized it. That has now changed. Recently, we took the time to elaborate six, very collaboratively defined (shame on us if that hadn't been the case) core values: ***Service, Collaboration, Professionalism, Stewardship, Integrity, and Respect***. These aren't particularly fancy or novel, but they do a fine job of describing how we approach our responsibilities, what we expect of each other, and what we promise to provide our members with on a regular basis.

Over the next few months, we'll incorporate these core values in a number of ways in our operations, both formally and informally, and make them even more of a part of our philosophy than they were before. Although we anticipate doing a very good job of heeding these as we operate amongst our member jurisdictions, partners, and private citizens, if we happen to fall short at any time in any of these core value areas, please don't hesitate to let us know. Now that we have them down on paper, there's something we can all point to.

Service

We will provide an essential service in southern Oregon by responding promptly, efficiently, and effectively to the needs of the individuals, jurisdictions, and public agencies we serve. At all times, we will balance our central role as support staff and direct service providers with the need to practice bold and proactive leadership.

Collaboration

We will dedicate ourselves to building and maintaining an atmosphere of camaraderie, cooperation, and collaboration, both inside and outside RVCOG. We will be guided by the knowledge that our success depends not only on the technical quality of our work, but also on our ability to maintain positive working relationships under all circumstances.

Professionalism

We will consistently provide the highest quality of work possible, while also exercising strict neutrality in all that we do. As ambassadors of our organization, we will always be aware of the impact of our individual actions on RVCOG as a whole.

Stewardship

We will take full responsibility for our actions and decisions in making RVCOG and its programs as cost effective, efficient, and sustainable as possible.

Integrity

We will exhibit the highest level of integrity in all that we do. Our actions will be honest, ethical, unbiased, and fair.

Respect

We will respect our clients, partners, members of the public, fellow employees, and ourselves by treating everyone with dignity, understanding, and compassion.



RVCOG

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Founded in 1968, RVCOG is a voluntary association of local governments and special districts in southern Oregon.

OUR MISSION

We shall act as a catalyst to promote quality of life, effective and efficient services, and leadership in regional communication, cooperation, planning, and action in southern Oregon.

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Grant to Expand Reach of Senior Meals Program

With the help of over 300 volunteers, the Food & Friends Senior Nutrition Program will serve almost a quarter-million meals this year to more than 3,300 seniors in Jackson and Josephine counties. This total represents the latest jump in a decade of consistent year-to-year increases, a trend that is threatening the capacity of the program to keep pace with demand.



Fortunately, Food & Friends has just been awarded a two-year, \$100,000 capacity-building grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust. The grant will provide \$60,000 in 2009 and \$40,000 in 2010 to assist the program in expanding the number of meals served to seniors in both counties. The funds will be used to purchase equipment, supplies, and additional meals and to increase the hours of operation at four key meal sites (Grants Pass, Central Point, Medford, and Ashland).

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the Meyer Memorial Trust for their generous and timely support.

Lifespan Respite — A Client's Perspective

It's so easy in our line of work to spend so much time focusing on programs and budgets that we lose the "small" picture, the on-the-ground realities of what those programs do and what those budgets pay for. So here is a reminder of one of those "small" pictures, and of the program that makes it possible.

Immediately following a November 2008 event by *Jackson County Lifespan Respite* to recognize and support family caregivers, an employee of Anna Maria Creekside Retirement, which had hosted the event, called Lifespan Respite for assistance. As a result of the information provided about what Lifespan Respite is, what services are provided, and how to access those services, she realized that it might not be necessary for her to go through what she was going through alone. For years she had carried the burden of the equivalent of two full time jobs—working at her profession while also caring for her husband at home—who had been diagnosed six years earlier at 54 with Alzheimer's disease. At age 60 he could no longer be left alone, and yet she could not stop earning a living for both of them.

Because of Lifespan Respite, she was able to access a relatively small but absolutely critical amount of assistance, which allowed her to keep her husband at home, delaying his placement into a memory care facility until the last moment (he passed away shortly after being placed in the facility).

It isn't one of our biggest programs by any means, and the budget is quite modest, but to her, it meant the world.

