

**CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**Acting as the Governing Body of Clackamas Water Environment Services**

**Policy Session Worksheet**

**Presentation Date:** December 16, 2025      **Approx. Start Time:** 2:30PM      **Approx. Length:** 60 mins

**Presentation Title:** Water Environment Services' Customer Assistance Program

**Department:** Water Environment Services (WES)

**Presenters:** Greg Geist, Director & Erin Blue, Finance Manager

**WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?**

Board approval of an updated Customer Assistance Program.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

WES is proposing updates to its Customer Assistance Program (CAP), formerly the Low Income Discount Program, to better support ratepayers facing financial hardship. The revision incorporates emerging best practices with the goal to expand access and ensure the program reaches as many community members in need as possible, while balancing the level of support required by staff to administer the program.

Proposed program updates include:

- Broadening assistance options to include emergency funding, late fee waivers, and connections to additional community resources
- Expanding program eligibility and enrollment mechanisms through partnership agreements with local utility providers and other agencies
- Establishing new funding sources, including by directing existing late fees to the customer assistance fund.
- Extending the discount to surface water charges

The new Customer Assistance Program represents a meaningful step forward in ensuring WES' wastewater and surface water services remain affordable for all community members.

If granted Board approval, staff will return to the Board for review and approval of specific funding levels, administrative rules, and partnership agreements.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):**

Is this item in your current budget?    ☒ YES      ☐ NO

What is the cost? The cost of WES' existing customer assistance program is approximately \$78,000 per year at the current level of participation.

The cost of the updated Customer Assistance Program will depend on program enrollment and funding levels determined by the Board in the annual budget process.

What is the funding source? Funding for the existing program is through sewer rate revenue. Funding for the new program will include surface water rate revenue as well as non-rate revenue sources such as late fees.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

- How does this item align with your Department's Strategic Business Plan goals?  
This aligns with WES' strategic plan goal to maintain a fair and equitable rate structure that fully recovers revenue requirements and promotes affordability. Specifically, the CAP update will complete the strategic plan initiative to update the low income discount program by 2025 while also supporting the performance goal to annually maintain a mid-range or lower impact rating for total annual cost of wastewater service relative to lowest quintile household income.
- How does this item align with the County's Performance Clackamas goals?  
This aligns with the County's goal for safe, secure, and livable communities by promoting affordability of wastewater and surface water services.

## **LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:**

WES' Rules provide the framework for the existing Low Income Discount Program. Funding sources and funding justifications for WES' proposed CAP have been reviewed by County Counsel.

## **PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:**

WES staff met with staff from the Cities of Gladstone, Milwaukie, Oregon City, and West Linn to present the updated program and receive feedback. The proposed program was presented to WES' Advisory Committee in September 2025 for input.

## **OPTIONS:**

1. Approve the updated Customer Assistance Program as proposed and direct staff to proceed with implementation.
2. Approve the updated Customer Assistance Program with modifications and provide direction on program elements requiring revision before implementation.
3. Direct staff to maintain the existing Low Income Discount Program without proposed updates.

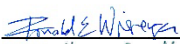

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Option #1: Approve the updated Customer Assistance Program as proposed and direct staff to proceed with implementation.

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

#A: Presentation Slides

## **SUBMITTED BY:**

Division Director/Head Approval   
Department Director/Head Approval   
County Administrator Approval \_\_\_\_\_

For information on this issue or copies of attachments, please contact Chris Koontz @ 503-679-4034
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**DECEMBER 16, 2025 | POLICY SESSION**

# WES Customer Assistance Program Update



# Affordability Framework

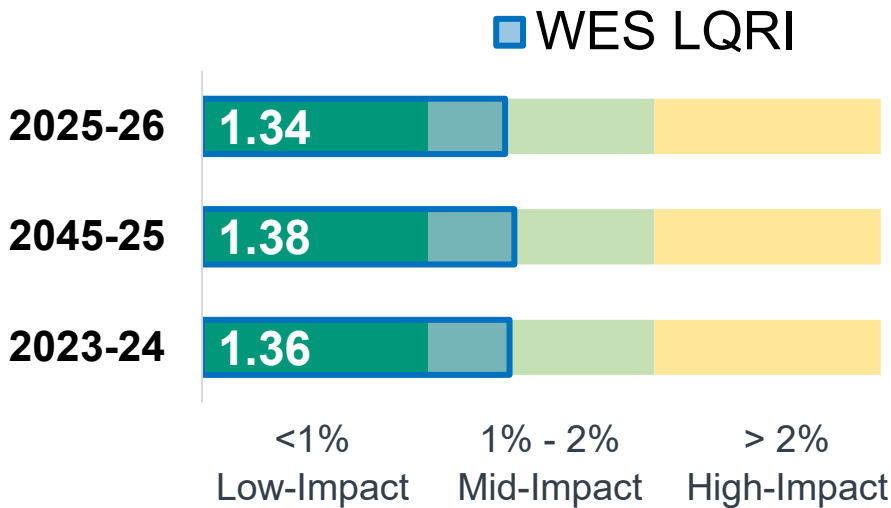
- Capital Investments
- Operations & Maintenance
- Federal/State Support
- Rate Structure Design
- Customer Assistance Programs (CAPs)



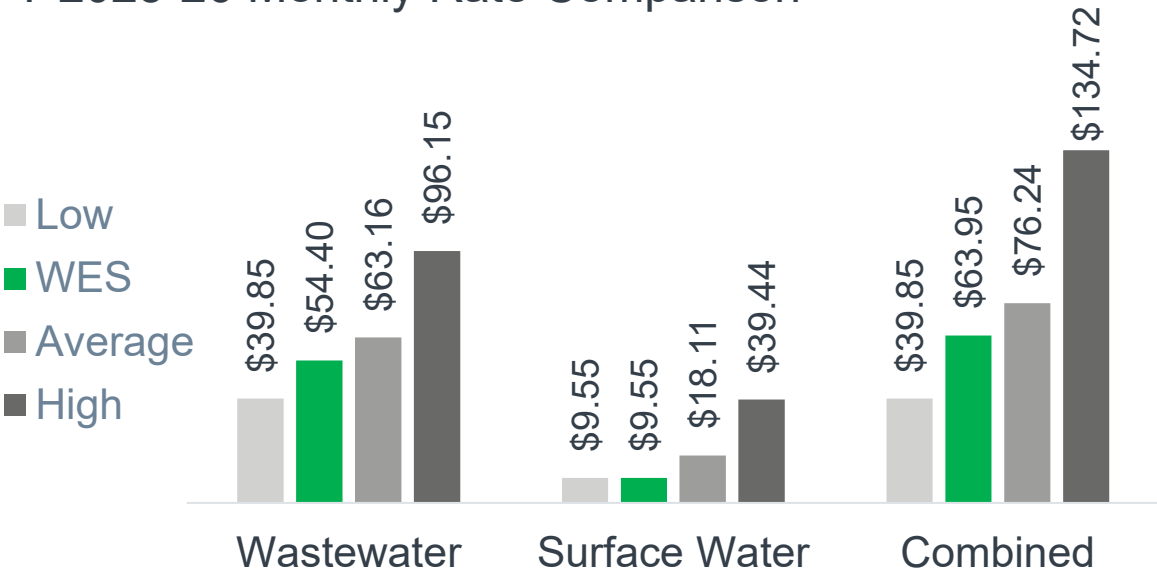
*Source: Environmental Financial Advisory Board (EFAB)  
Water Affordability Work Group*

# Affordability Assessment

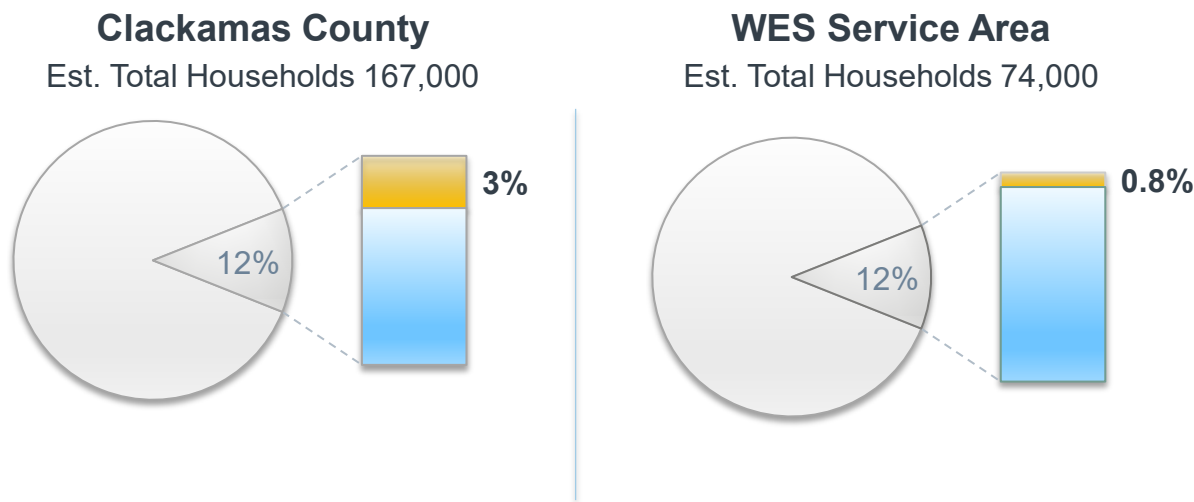
## Lowest Quintile Residential Indicator



## FY 2025-26 Monthly Rate Comparison



## Utility Assistance Eligibility vs. Utilization



## WES Financial Scorecard

Credit Rating	AAA
Weighted Average Cost of Debt	1.52 %
Days' Operating Reserve	146

## WES Customer Assistance Program Ratepayer Impact

Current Utilization	\$0.14 per month
Full Utilization	\$2.14 per month

# Project Timeline and Progress





## WES' Vision is to...

Be a **collaborative partner** in building a resilient clean water future where all people benefit, and rivers thrive.

**Thank you** to the organizations and individuals who have partnered with us on this project:

- City of Gladstone
- City of Milwaukie
- City of Oregon City
- City of West Linn
- Portland General Electric
- Clackamas County Social Services
- St. Vincent de Paul
- WES Project Team



# Overview of Potential Program Updates

Program Element	Current Program	New Program
Assistance Offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-Income Discount</li> <li>• Payment Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income-Qualified Discount</li> <li>• Payment Plans</li> <li>• Emergency / Crisis Bill Assistance</li> <li>• Late Fee Waivers / Forgiveness</li> <li>• Referrals to Other Programs</li> </ul>
Enrollment Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Years</li> </ul>
Funding Source and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sewer Rate Revenues</li> <li>• No program target</li> <li>• No annual funding maximum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sewer Rate Revenues</li> <li>• Non-rate revenues</li> <li>• Donations / roundup</li> <li>• External sources / grants</li> <li>• Rate-funded portion <math>\leq</math> x% of total revenue</li> <li>• Legal justification</li> </ul>
Discount Amount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% reduction to monthly sewer charge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50% reduction to monthly sewer and surface water charges</li> </ul>
Income Eligibility	$\leq$ 60% Oregon SMI for HH Size	



# Next Steps

- Board Review and Approval
  - Update to Customer Assistance Program terms in WES' Rules
  - Amendments to City Partner IGAs
  - Agreement with PGE
  - FY 2026-27 Program Funding (part of budget process)
- Implementation Preparation and Outreach
- New Program Launch