

Sending Clean Water To Your Home

Adam Smith said he has “been trying to get to Grants Pass for a while now.”

The new superintendent of the city’s Water Treatment Plant came to the plant in July as the graveyard shift operator before being tapped to serve as superintendent in September.

“Having the opportunity to work as an operator directly with the crew and under Jason (Canady) was a great advantage,” said Smith.

“Communicating the value of natural resources is really difficult. People expect it. They take it for granted.”

Canady is the city’s director of Public Works and spent 20 years working with the WTP.

Born and raised in Oregon, Smith is originally from Brookings and spent some of his later life in Jewell. After graduating from Oregon State University, his early career was in fisheries and with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

“I’ve always been into water and natural resources,” Smith said.

His time with ODFW was spent mostly in “stream work” and habitat surveys.

“It was a lot of hiking up creeks chasing dead salmon,” he said.

While visiting relatives in Hawaii, Smith learned about an opening at the water treatment plant for Maui County and he applied for the job. He spent nine years there, working his way up to a grade four operator, and later assistant supervisor.

Living on an island is not what it is cracked up to be, said Smith. Married with two daughters, ages 4 and 8, he and his wife decided it was time to

move back to Oregon.

“There weren’t a lot of options for our girls in Hawaii. My wife and I both grew up in Oregon,” Smith said.

In 2017, he accepted a position as the director of the water plant and distribution in nearby Gold Hill. That didn’t last long.

“I was looking for a professional home and Gold Hill was not it,” said Smith.

A short stint in the private sector served the interlude between Gold Hill and Grants Pass.

Since first starting at the Grants Pass WTP, Smith said his goal has been to learn as much about the plant and plant operations as possible.

“It’s really important to me to contribute at a high-level right off the bat, so for me it was important to get up to speed quickly,” said Smith.

He admits that his first tour of the plant was “intimidating,” but says it is also rewarding at the same time in the challenges and learning opportunities it represents.

“The plant is complicated. What we do with our pump stations is complicated,” he said.

Those details can be difficult to get across to the consumer, Smith said.

“Communicating the value of natural resources is really difficult. People expect it. They take it for granted, but it takes a lot of work to bring clean drinking water to people,” said Smith.

“People just turn on their faucets and expect it to be there,” he said.

When water isn’t there, or there is a change in the water’s quality, that’s when people notice, said Smith.

“The slightest change in quality, and our phones start



ADAM SMITH, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE WATER TREATMENT PLANT.

ringing.” Taste and odor are the most common triggers, he said.

The aging condition of the almost 80-year-old plant also presents a variety of challenges for Smith and his crew, he said.

“Ongoing preventative maintenance of the equipment is a major portion of the job,” said Smith.

Upgrades to systems and operations has helped.

“Jason and the current crew have done such a great job in controlling the plant and automation of the plant,” he said.

However, structural issues presented by the plant’s age are beyond the abilities of the crew.

“I’m not a structural engineer, but once you get water penetration of concrete and rebar, you start losing strength,” Smith said.

Another challenge is presented by the plant’s inability to ex-

pand any further, he said.

“We’re running out of room here to continue updating the plant as water regulations continue to get more advanced. We’re sandwiched between the road and the river,” Smith said.

Working with his crew to learn all they can about how to improve general plant operations as they prepare for the construction of a new plant, is another crucial aspect of the job, he said.

“One of the benefits to accepting the position is the opportunity to build a lifelong career in developing the new plant through what can be learned from the old plant. We get to learn what works and what doesn’t, and apply that moving forward,” said Smith.

“We’re learning from the plant as it operates, needs re- (See “SMITH” page 10)

Public Works And You

The Grants Pass Public Works Department offers a variety of programs and opportunities to benefit and educate residents about public works.

Adopt-A-Street

This Public Works program gives citizens a chance to take charge of a chosen street and organize regular litter pickups to keep our community walkways clean and beautiful.

Bulk Water

The City of Grants Pass offers a bulk water station.

Emergency Drinking Water

Check out the facts about our water trailer, which is capable of supplying safe drinking water to the Grants Pass residents in times of emergency.

FOG

Fats, Oils, and Grease poured down the kitchen sink or drain system congeals inside the sewer pipes and cause problems, requiring expensive repairs and sewer line cleaning.

Hazardous Sidewalk Repair Program

Find out how you can lower the cost of replacing hazardous sidewalks on your property through the City’s Hazardous Sidewalk Repair Program.

Low-Use Water Gardening

You can conserve water by choosing plants that reduce the need for extra watering.

Street Closures

Find out where local streets are closed due to construction or other issues.

Water Conservation Tips

Learn how to conserve water both indoors and out, and find out how to detect leaks and read your water meter.

To learn more about these and other programs, visit the city’s Public Works And You page: <https://www.grants-passoregon.gov/1013/Public-Works-and-You>

Help Wanted: Water Treatment Plant Replacement Project Offers Local Opportunities

By Lisa Beutler
Special to GP Now

Construction for the Grants Pass replacement Water Treatment Plant will begin in earnest in 2021 and the city is encouraging local firms to get involved. One particular focus area will be on the use of local workforce and materials vendors.

The city plans to use a process called design-build to construct the plant. Design-build is a method of project delivery in which one firm works under a single contract to provide design and construction services.

This company, in turn, is responsible for hiring labor and purchasing materials. The idea is to ensure a unified flow of work from initial concept through completion.

The city will emphasize the importance of hiring and buying local as they issue a request for proposals to design-build firms. The design-builders will be encouraged to identify and use local resources throughout the project.

The goal is to distribute and amplify the benefits of major construction activities across the community.

This will be accomplished through a combination of communications, community engagement and outreach; providing information to potential companies, vendors and service providers interested in completing the plant construction.

One suggested approach will be for the design-builder to divide the project into workable packages that local firms and suppliers can participate in.

This is a win-win, as the design-builder will then have access to the local workforce, as well as their experience and capabilities, along with developed relationships with various local materials suppliers and vendors.

Another employment opportunity will be offered through an invitation to bid for the initial cleanup of the construction site, which was formerly a large vehicle storage and landscaping business.

This bid package will include activities related to site cleanup and demolition of existing structures, stormwater management, installation of security fencing, and environmental mitigation of the proposed water treatment plant site.

This will be a separate opportunity from the design-build request for proposals.

The city will be requiring the selected design-builder to develop and submit their experience and approach for use of local workforce and trades, and local purchasing in the delivery of the project.

This plan will be evaluated as part of the selection process and will consider the design-builder's past approach to delivering construction projects using local workforce and materials, descriptions of potential local work elements that can be segregated into discrete bid packages, and a listing of localized trades or materials that could be used by the proposer for the project.

This contracting approach will allow the project managers to make regular reports to the City Council on local employment progress, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Investment in water infrastructure has long been recognized as an economic engine for local economies.

The goal is to distribute and amplify the benefits of major construction activities across the community.

In addition to the immediate benefit of a paycheck for a Grants Pass resident, or the sale of materials by a local retailer, it eventually leads to the spending of that check or profit on a new vehicle at a local car dealership, meals at a local restaurant, or home improvement supplies at the local hardware store.

The spending of each dollar multiplies its impact in improving the city's economy.

The impact of infrastructure

investment on the local economy is part of a much larger national discussion. Like Grants Pass, much of the country has a need to replace aging water infrastructure.

The decision to invest is sometimes difficult for a community. It is much easier to understand the need for other types of infrastructure, such as roads, that are highly visible to the users, unlike water infrastructure that often goes unnoticed.

During their most recent annual assessment, the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) determined the nation is chronically underinvesting in water infrastructure. Its most recent report card gave the nation's Drinking Water Infrastructure the grade of "D."

More recently, the benefits to local economies of investment in water infrastructure has been studied extensively as part of economic recovery discussions

related to the ongoing pandemic.

In a joint paper issued by ASCE and US Water Alliance, "The Economic Benefits of Investing in Water Infrastructure - How a Failure to Act Would Affect the US Economic Recovery," economists determined, "full funding of water infrastructure needs would create nearly 800,000 new jobs by 2039.

Of these new jobs, 61 percent would be in construction and professional services stimulated by the boost in infrastructure spending.

Increased reliability and water quality would also increase productivity and efficiency in other sectors such as manufacturing, leading to more job gains.

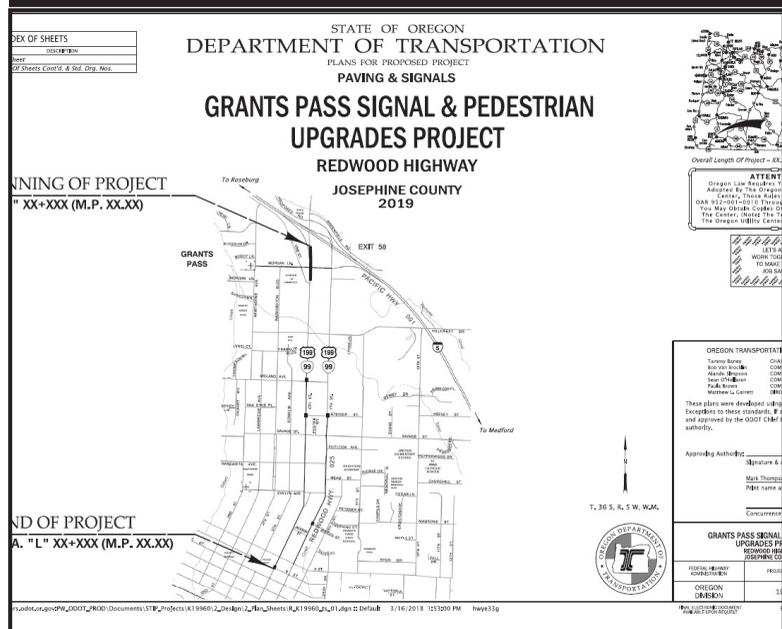
Wages would also rise with US workers earning more than \$2.8 trillion in additional dis-

(See "LOCAL" page 10)

Direct, Indirect, & Induced Impacts of Local Water Infrastructure Investment

An ASCE study outlined the economic benefits of local water infrastructure investment:

- **DIRECT**- economic implications for companies directly involved in designing, engineering, and constructing water infrastructure.
- **INDIRECT** - additional economic implications created by the actions of firms directly involved in water infrastructure. Business to business purchases of goods and services, like machinery for construction of a water infrastructure project, is an indirect impact.
- **INDUCED** - purchases in retail, medical, leisure, and other sectors dependent on the income earned by workers in all sectors of the economy that are affected by infrastructure investments.



OREGON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PLANS FOR GRANTS PASS SIGNAL AND PEDESTRIAN UPGRADES PROJECT DEPICTING THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE PROJECT ALONG SIXTH AND SEVENTH STREETS.

Upgrades... (from page 1)

built to current seismic standards.

The state is systematically upgrading those bridges in each region. There are 12 such bridges in Region Three, which encompasses Grants Pass.

The bridges over Sixth, Seventh, and Hillcrest Drive affect Grants Pass, said Elliott.

The retrofit work will involve excavating down to the footings and foundations of the bridges to expand them, while installing new piling down to the bedrock, Elliott said.

That work will begin this spring. To help facilitate the work, the city had to move a major water line.

“First a redundant line had

to be installed in order to continue to feed water to those areas while the original pipe gets moved,” said Elliott.

For the final process, the state has proposed a temporary closure of a segment of Hillcrest Drive. Those details are being worked out between the state and the city, Elliott said.

Above the work on I-5, the traffic won’t be interrupted.

“People on the interstate probably won’t even know what’s going on,” he said.

For additional information about street closures due to engineering projects, residents can visit the city’s website: <https://www.grantspassoregon.gov/278/street-closures>.

Grants Pass
Public Safety Stations:

Parkway Public Safety Center
800 East Park Street

Hillcrest Public Safety Station
199 NW Hillcrest Drive

Redwood Public Safety Station
3071 Leonard Road

Strategic... (from page 5)

Time-bound: Objectives should identify a definite target date for completion and/or frequencies for specific action steps that are important for achieving the goal. How often should the staff member work on this assignment? By when should this goal be accomplished? Staff should incorporate specific dates, calendar milestones, or time frames that are relative to the achievement of another result (i.e., dependencies and linkages to other projects).

“To achieve our goals, we have to define specific areas of focus and activities through ob-

jectives and actions,” said Cubic.

Once the 2021 Work Plan has been established, it will be posted at the city’s website so that community members can be aware of the city’s goals and plans for achieving those goals. For additional information, visit: <https://www.grantspassoregon.gov/313/Mission-Strategic-Plan>.

“Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”
— Abraham Lincoln

Smith... (from page 8)

pairs, works within its limits and capacities,” he said.

Working with the existing crew is also a benefit, he said, comparing the current staff of veterans and new employees to the best of an NFL draft season.

“To work with this crew is very exciting,” said Smith.

“What gets you is the passion people develop for doing this job of providing safe, clean drinking water,” he said.

Another advantage comes through working with local suppliers, local contractors and firms whenever possible, said Smith.

“It’s a local culture that has been ingrained in the crew. It’s also something that’s really important to me,” Smith said.

When he isn’t at the plant, Smith said he spends as much time as possible with his young family. He said the outdoor recreation opportunities are more diverse in Oregon than in Hawaii, touting his love for hunting, fishing, and camping.

“And we try to get on the water as much as possible,” said Smith.

HAC... (from page 6)

for incentives.

He points to the city’s sale and approval of senior housing at Ramsey and Nebraska as a “successful milestone.”

“We need those apartments. The notion that we can do that and move forward, and that the council sees the value of committing resources to that is a big plus,” said Walker.

“All we’re talking about is apartments that someone can afford.”

Walker believes people may be misinformed or misunderstand the exact nature of affordable housing.

“There seems to be a little bit of aversion to the term,” he said.

“All we’re talking about is apartments that someone can afford,” said Walker.

He compares affordable housing to affordable dining or an affordable car, neither of which imply something “less than par.”

“Affordable housing doesn’t imply substandard and doesn’t imply the renters are going to be undesirable,” he said.

He said he wants the community to understand that the housing crisis is a community problem.

For some people, it may mean building an Accessory Dwelling Unit on their property (see subsequent story this issue), he said.

“For some it may mean making some minor sacrifices or inconveniences, such as apartments in the neighborhood, a little extra traffic, or kids playing in the neighborhood so you have to slow down now,” Walker said.

“We’re all in this together and we’re going to have to solve this problem together,” said Walker.

Local... (from page 9)

posable household income over a 20-year span, leading to an increase of more than \$2,000 per household.”

During recent outreach discussion with Grants Pass businesses, the city learned that avoided costs are equally important to those businesses.

Every local business contacted indicated that a loss of reliable service and/or fire protection would be extremely difficult, if not catastrophic to their bottom line.

One major employer pointed out that investment in water infrastructure would help attract new business and employment for the region.

Nationally, the same ASCE study found that, “More reliable water services would also help US households avoid up to \$7.7 billion in cumulative medical costs over 20 years, \$2.6 trillion in cumulative losses incurred from service disruptions and overflows, and \$1.4 trillion in cumulative disposable income loss.”

<http://www.uswateralliance.org>