

# Investing in Our Infrastructure for a Healthy Water Future

## BACKGROUND

Oak Lodge Water Services (OLWS) provides drinking water, wastewater, and watershed protection services to 28,400 people in Oak Grove, Jennings Lodge, and portions of Milwaukie and Gladstone. OLWS treats 1.5 billion gallons of wastewater per year, providing a vital public health service and protecting the environment. The collections system conveys wastewater from homes and businesses to a wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater treatment facility – currently through a two-step process — cleans the wastewater and discharges it into the Willamette River.

## CHALLENGES

- **Inflow and Infiltration**

(I&I) occurs when rainwater and groundwater enter the collections system, particularly during storm events. Additional water exceeds the system's capacity, leading to sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) into the Willamette River which could harm the environment and puts stress on the wastewater treatment plant.

Over the course of the last 4 years, OLWS incurred 22 sanitary sewer overflows. Those overflows were reported to DEQ after every event. All events occurred during heavy rainfall in the services area. DEQ fined OLWS during these events which compounds the necessity to increase rates to pay for fines and fix the underlying pipe deficiency.

## SOLUTIONS

The **most urgent project** OLWS must address is:

1. Address I&I at high-need sites to limit risk for SSOs and reduce pressure at the wastewater treatment plant. OLWS is focused on replacing wastewater mainline in the northwest part of the service area that has approximately 3 miles of pipe that is anticipated to fail within the next 10 years at an anticipated cost of \$8.5 million.

OLWS recently raised user rates by 40% over the past 2 years to pay for these necessary upgrades and anticipates continual rate hikes for several years, a significant hardship for many ratepayers. The average user rate in July of 2019 was \$87.89 per household. The average user rate in July of 2022 was \$94.30 per household. The average user rate in July of 2024 raised to \$135.27 per household. OLWS was committed to the customers to keep the rate increases mild while dealing with the economic effects during the COVID pandemic. **OLWS is seeking capstone state funding of \$3.3M** for the I&I project to offset the cost on vulnerable community members.