



CORBETT
WATER DISTRICT

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Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2025-2026

Corbett Water District Mission Statement

The mission of the Corbett Water District is to provide current and future customers with reliable, safe and high-quality water at an equitable price; to create and maintain outstanding customer service; to protect the environmental health of the watershed; and to ensure fiscal accountability of the Corbett Water District.

At the Corbett Water District (CWD), we are united in our commitment to this mission of delivering safe, reliable, high-quality water to our customers, with equitable pricing and fiscal responsibility. But as our system infrastructure ages and overall economic costs have risen, our mission to reliably deliver safe and adequate water from our watershed to our customers has become more complex. Our ideas of equitable pricing and fiscal responsibility must evolve, and we hope the public's interpretation of our mission will evolve with us to meet the challenges of the future.

While the emphasis on keeping costs low has long guided our work, there is now a critical need for bold investment in capital improvements to secure both the District's future and our customers' safety and comfort. Our Gordon Creek Watershed is independent of other water utilities. The District cannot simply maintain the status quo, but must proactively build, repair, and maintain a resilient infrastructure while fostering a culture that values excellence and strong community relationships. Our Board and staff share the vision of an environmentally healthy, sustainable system – one that prioritizes source water security and operates transparently under community governance. So we must move forward together in partnership with the community.

None of this is possible without our staff. The District supports a small staff who tackle a wide variety of tasks on any given day. Our employees each possess an institutional knowledge that is key to the short-term and long-term success of each and every goal we wish to accomplish. Throughout my tenure as manager, and with each budget that I have prepared, I've focused on attracting and retaining valuable employees. We continue to stay on par with neighboring water providers in terms of wages and benefits. We provide training opportunities, update employee policies, ensure that our equipment is reliable and safe, and provide a working environment that inspires our employees to come in every day and solve problems.

We are also heavily dependent on volunteers – especially around acquiring and managing grant funding. These volunteers are a huge asset to the District, creating opportunities that we might not otherwise get to pursue. At the same time, they are doing work that would normally have to be done by a paid employee, raising the concern

that if we were to lose our volunteers, we would lose that potential to do the projects that we hope will improve our District.

A Special District is a form of local government that is tasked with providing a specific service to the community. We accept property taxes from the people in our District, which makes us subject to Oregon's Local Budget Law. I think the main purpose of Budget Law is to make sure that our financial planning is done transparently, and with public input. This is why our Budget Committee is made up of our elected Board of Commissioners, but also five members of our community that have different experiences and points of view. At each meeting the members of our Budget Committee will have a chance to give input on our proposed budget. We also want other members of the public to have a chance to weigh in. All of our budget documents are available to the public. Community members are allowed (and encouraged!) to attend meetings, and at every meeting we will have a time where we accept public comment.

The document you have received and will be working with is a proposed budget, which I prepared using my best projections for what we need and want to accomplish in the next year. As the Budget Committee meets, they will deliberate on these numbers and potentially change them. At the last Committee meeting, they will approve the budget. After that, the Board of Commissioners will hold a Budget Hearing, which will give members of our community another opportunity to comment on the approved budget. The Board will make any final changes, and then vote on a resolution to adopt the budget. Finally, we'll submit the adopted budget to Multnomah County.

This year, we are starting our budget process earlier and having more Budget Committee meetings. My hope is that as our newly expanded budget process unfolds, you'll gain an understanding of our District's direction and the challenges we face. We want your feedback, and then we'll move forward together.

Thank you,

Ana Linden

District Manager