



April 22, 2015

Mayor Charlie Hales  
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City Hall  
1220 SW Fourth Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204

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Resources

**Lynn Youngbar**, Organizational

Development Consultant

I am here today representing my own organization, the Urban Greenspaces Institute and as a co-founder and board member of The Intertwine Alliance. The Alliance today has 140 partners all of whom are committed to expanding and protecting the region's system of parks, trail, and natural areas and improving watershed health, protecting the region's biodiversity, and responding to Climate Change, specifically climate adaptation or in the parlance of the city-county Climate Action Plan, Climate Preparation.

The City of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services and Parks and Recreation are among the most significant partners in the Alliance. Why am I here representing the Alliance? Simply put, Portland has provided tremendous leadership in issues that transcend political boundaries. Nowhere has that leadership been more important and more appropriate than watershed and ecosystem health.

On page 6 of the watershed scorecard presentation you will see a timeline extending from 2005 when Portland adopted the Watershed Plan to 2018 when BES will have collected eight years of data. An important date and document are missing from the timeline. In 2013 The Intertwine Alliance released the Regional Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Guide for the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan region. Both the RCS and Biodiversity Guide focus on the health of the region's watersheds. One of the biggest gaps in knowledge of and impediments to improvement of watershed health is the lack of research and long term data. One way in which the city has helped address these gaps is through sharing of data by BES and Portland Parks and Recreation at the Alliance's annual Urban Ecology and Conservation Symposium which has been held at Portland State University for the past 13 years. This watershed scorecard project is another significant contribution to the region's knowledge of the status of watershed and ecosystem health. I am here to today on behalf of the Alliance to offer our collective support to BES for having undertaken this important effort and to all of you for working to ensure all the city's bureaus are committed to protecting and restoring watershed health in the heart of the most urbanized portion of our region.

I've personally never been a huge fan of or participated in Earth Day events. Everyday is Earth Day and, frankly, I am more interested in what individuals and agencies are doing every day to protect and improve environmental quality. I am participating in this Earth Day event because, based on my more than thirty years working with BES, that they and others in the city have been doing the day-in, day-out work to improve watershed and ecosystem health. But it's not enough to do the work. We need data to demonstrate successes and identify where we need to focus more effort. The report you received today states, "It's not just about BES." I could not agree more. It's about the entire region and this report is an important tool for the region, not just the City of Portland.

All of that said, I of course, have a few suggestions to go beyond the current report card:

- 1). There is no mention of the importance of watershed and ecosystem health to the city's economy. There is no question anymore regarding the contributions the city's natural environment make to quality of life and economic health, through the myriad ecosystem services it provides the city.
- 2). The Greater Portland Pulse regional scorecard on natural systems, ironically, has no regional indicators regarding watershed or ecosystem health. I would like to see the scorecard used as a model to reintroduce watershed and ecosystem health into the region scorecard.
- 3). You note that the scorecard will go live on BES's website May 1<sup>st</sup>. I want to encourage BES staff to work with The Intertwine Alliance staff to ensure it's at least linked to the Alliance's website and shared with the Alliance's 140 members and the broader public.
- 4). On page 14 the Columbia Slough Biological Communities received an F. I fear that the scorecard might be used to reduce resources to low scoring water bodies like the Slough. I have been involved in Columbia Slough environmental issues for thirty years. I believe the city should be grading "on the curve." It's inappropriate to compare Johnson Creek or Balch Creek with the Columbia Slough given how poorly the city has treated the Columbia Slough Watershed.
- 5). On page 18 there is a depiction of potential future trajectories of watershed health. You must add a steep downward projector in the face of increased population and lack of resources, financial and personnel. It is unrealistic to envision an uptick or leveling of watershed health while knowing there will be more intense development within the city, without increasing resources to protect watershed health.

Respectfully,



Mike Houck