



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

AUGUST 3, 2020





Third Follow-Up on Combined Sewer Overflow Performance Audit

The Wastewater Treatment Division has continued to partner with the City of Seattle to increase participation in RainWise, a program that provides incentives for property owners to install small-scale green stormwater projects that reduce stormwater runoff entering sewers and waterways. The Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) has implemented the final remaining recommendation from our 2012 combined sewer overflow performance audit. Through implementation of the audit's recommendations, WTD will improve the efficiency, quality, and consistency of cost estimations during combined sewer overflow project planning and will increase the application of green stormwater infrastructure to projects while ensuring effective implementation and ongoing evaluation. With implementation of the final open recommendation, WTD has taken steps to increase participation in RainWise, a cost-effective approach to reducing stormwater volume entering the combined sewer system and to improving water quality. The RainWise program currently diverts about 25 million gallons of untreated stormwater each year.

County officials estimate that 118 billion gallons of untreated stormwater carry pollutants directly into area waterways and Puget Sound each year, making stormwater runoff one of the greatest current threats to water quality in King County. During heavy rains, stormwater can also overwhelm the capacity of the combined sewer system, resulting in the release of untreated wastewater into nearby waterways. WTD reports that it is conducting two separate efforts—the Clean Water Plan and the Water Quality Benefits Evaluation—that will help inform future management decisions, including potential expansion of green stormwater incentive programs, about how best to address stormwater pollution and improve regional water quality.

WTD has implemented eight of the audit's 10 recommendations. Seven recommendations were determined to be fully implemented in the 2014 and 2019 follow-ups (recommendations 1-5, 7, and 8), and recommendations 9 and 10 were closed in 2019 because the window of opportunity for these recommendations to have an impact had passed. Therefore, the table below provides a status update on recommendation 6 from the 2012 Combined Sewer Overflow Performance Audit.

Of the 10 audit recommendations:

 8 DONE	 0 PROGRESS	 0 OPEN	 2 CLOSED
Fully implemented Auditor will no longer monitor.	Partially implemented Auditor will continue to monitor.	Remain unresolved Auditor will continue to monitor.	No longer applicable Auditor will no longer monitor.

Please see below for details on the implementation status of this final recommendation.





Recommendation 1	On January 17, 2014	DONE	
Recommendation 2	On January 17, 2014	DONE	
Recommendation 3	On January 17, 2014	DONE	
Recommendation 4	On January 17, 2014	DONE	
Recommendation 5	On January 17, 2014	DONE	
Recommendation 6		DONE	

King County should enhance its efforts to work with the City of Seattle to provide incentives for individual customers to reduce their use of the wastewater treatment system.

STATUS UPDATE: King County and the City of Seattle continue to partner on RainWise, a program that provides incentives for property owners to install small-scale green stormwater projects that reduce stormwater runoff entering sewers and waterways. Since 2018, WTD and Seattle Public Utilities have taken steps to increase participation in RainWise. These steps include increasing rebates to program participants, enhancing outreach and education opportunities to increase the availability of trained contractors, engaging with community-based organizations that provide translation and equitable program support services, and proactive recruiting of large roof partners, such as community entities that manage multiple properties (e.g., the University of Washington Green Greek Program, Seattle Public Schools, and Seattle Housing Authority).

As of March 2020, participants in RainWise are collectively capturing runoff from over 54 acres of impervious surfaces, which removes 25 million gallons of stormwater from the combined sewer system annually. RainWise participants include 56 “big roof” properties, characterized by having a roof larger than 2,000 square feet.

IMPACT: RainWise projects reduce the volume of polluted stormwater entering sewers and waterways. By taking steps to increase participation in RainWise, King County is expanding a cost-effective approach to reducing combined sewer overflows, diverting flow from county treatment facilities, and improving water quality.

Recommendation 7	On January 9, 2019	DONE	
Recommendation 8	On January 9, 2019	DONE	

Recommendation 9

On January 9, 2019

CLOSED



Recommendation 10

On January 9, 2019

CLOSED



Cindy Drake conducted this review. If you have any questions, or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at KCAO@KingCounty.gov or 206-477-1033.