



## King County's Wastewater Today

### Wastewater Treatment: Realities and Reinvestment

#### Event Summary

#### Overview and Purpose

On March 25, 2020, the Clean Water Plan project hosted a lunchtime educational webinar, which was designed to inform the public about the existing conditions in our wastewater treatment system and highlight areas for decision-making for the Clean Water Plan. This was an opportunity to share technical planning information with the community in a public-friendly and accessible way. This webinar was the first of several planned information sessions, with future topics to include wet weather management, pollution reduction, and finance.

The webinar provided participants with an opportunity to:

- Learn about the realities our current wastewater system is facing
- Understand factors we need to consider when making decisions
- Continue the conversation on what challenges and solutions matter most

The webinar was designed to provide participants with background and context so they can weigh in on future Clean Water Plan decisions.

#### Promotions

The project team promoted the event through several methods. On March 12, we sent an email update to 4,700+ subscribers on our project email list. We also posted the information about the event on the project webpages (in English and in Spanish) and Facebook page, as well as sent emails to project partners, community-based organizations, and community groups.

Participants signed up online at the event registration page by providing a first name and email. Participants could also provide information about how they learned about the webinar, indicate their affiliation or role, and request accessibility accommodations (including closed captioning and language interpretation) for the webinar.



Event posting on King County's Facebook

## Format and Content

The event began with a welcome and indigenous land acknowledgement. Speakers then introduced themselves and asked participants about their affiliation. Using the Question and Answer (Q&A) box, participants submitted answers and the moderator read several aloud.

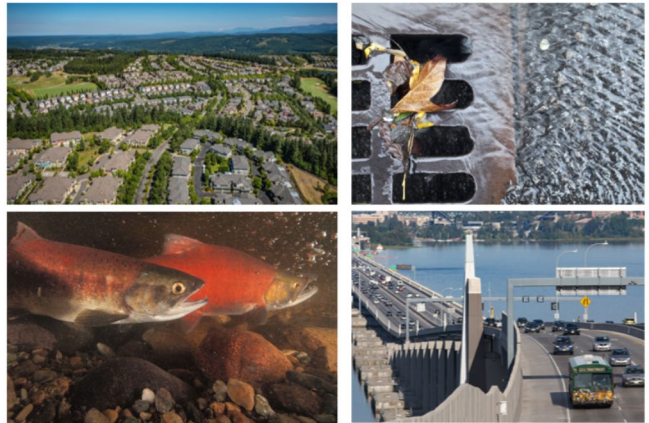
The speakers gave an overview of the Clean Water Plan process, the purpose and need for the plan, and the anticipated schedule. They also highlighted the importance of community involvement and reflected on community priorities heard to date.

In the second half of the presentation, presenters dove into the details of the wastewater system issues that King County is considering as we develop the plan, including:

1. An aging sewer system
2. Capacity in sewer pipes and pumps
3. Upgrades to wastewater treatment plants
4. Recycling resources from wastewater

Lastly, the project team answered participant questions for about 25 minutes. Using the Q&A box, participants submitted questions for members of the project team to answer live. The project team also documented unanswered questions and key issues, which they will use to update public-facing project materials and for reporting.

### Our region is changing



Presentation slide illustrating the trends shaping our region's future

### WASTEWATER SYSTEM ISSUES

- Treatment plants capacity and level of treatment
- Capacity in sewer pipes and pumps
- Aging sewer systems, natural disasters and climate change
- Recycling resources from wastewater

### WET WEATHER ISSUES

- Stormwater and combined sewer overflows

### POLLUTION REDUCTION ISSUES

- Preventing pollution at the source
- Pollution from historical activities

### FINANCIAL ISSUES

- Paying for clean water investments

STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

Presentation slide showing eight key issues we will consider as part of the Clean Water Plan

## Participants

Three-hundred and eighty-four (384) people registered in advance and 278 people participated in the webinar.

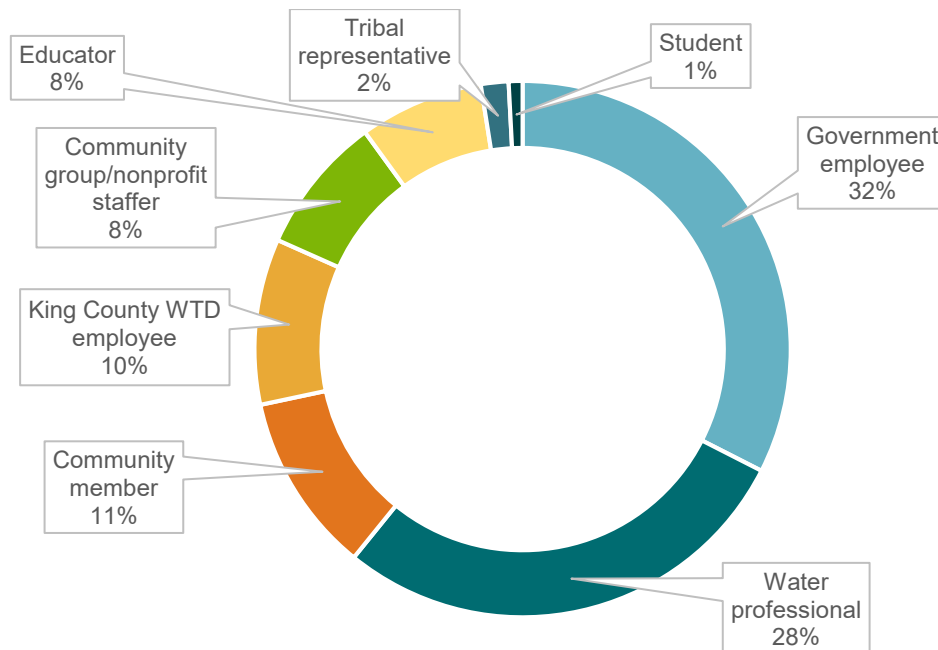
Of those who registered in advance and provided residential information, 82% were from Seattle. The other top cities included Bellevue, Olympia, Renton, and Sammamish. In total, registrants represented at least 47 different cities, including some as far as New York City.

Out of those who provided professional information: 33% identified as water professionals, 25% identified as government employees, and 10% identified as community members. Others identified as community organization staffers, students, and tribal representatives. Eighty-six (86) registrants were employed by King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks. In total, registrants represented at least 150 different organizations and departments.

Almost 60% of registrants said they learned about the webinar through King County emails.

As the webinar kicked off, we also asked participants about their affiliation with the following question: “We want to know: are you a tribal representative, water professional, environmental advocate, government employee, student, community member, or someone else?”

About 40% of participants replied in the Q&A box:



AFFILIATION OF PARTICIPANTS

## Questions and Comments

Throughout the presentation, participants submitted more than 55 individual questions and comments. The project team was able to answer more than half during the presentation and dedicated Q&A time. Some broad themes that emerged from the participants' questions are listed below. As the process moves forward, the project team will refer to these key themes and topics to inform future outreach materials and messaging.

### Key themes:

- **Improving water quality:** Participants asked several questions about improving water quality, including nutrient requirements, climate change impacts, removing specific contaminants, and meeting regulatory standards.
- **Wastewater treatment:** Participants raised questions related to King County's wastewater services, including topics such as: wastewater treatment plant capacity, impacts of COVID-19 on flows and wipes in the system, combined sewer overflows, recycling of resources, and green stormwater infrastructure.
- **Planning schedule:** Participants also asked about the schedule of the Clean Water Plan process, expected level of public involvement, and next steps.
- **Plan process:** Participants requested the boundaries of the plan, lessons learned from previous planning efforts, and examples of project actions that may be included in the Clean Water Plan. They were also interested in how the Clean Water Plan relates to other county initiatives, including the Clean Water Healthy Habitat Initiative and the Strategic Climate Action Plan.
- **Regional engagement:** Many participants asked about how King County is working with the greater King County community throughout the planning process.
- **Technical details:** Several people requested more information on topics such as King County wastewater rates, gray water use, landfills, stormwater projects, and combined sewer overflows.