

Clean Water Plan

2020 Regional Engagement Summary



Clean Water Plan
Making the right investments at the right time

 **King County**
Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Wastewater Treatment Division

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Executive Summary

Introduction

King County is undertaking a large planning effort because it is facing critical decisions on investments in the regional wastewater system and water quality. We want to develop a plan for investments that bring the greatest water quality benefits in a way that is equitable and sustainable for the region. This planning effort, called the **Clean Water Plan**, will set the direction for investments for decades to come. The possible investments are large in terms of cost and would take several years complete. Through completing the planning process, King County wants to set a direction that we make the right investments at the right time for the best water quality outcomes.

King County's wastewater utility is funded by ratepayers through monthly sewer rates and the capacity charge. We take seriously our obligation to protect public health and the environment, and to be accountable to our ratepayers. That is why it is so important that we engage with the public on the Clean Water Plan. When King County hears from everyone, we all benefit. In 2019, King County launched a robust engagement process to learn from the community about their priorities related to rivers, lakes, and Puget Sound.

In 2020, King County centered the year's engagement on **informing** the community on several key issues: State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) scoping process, wastewater management, and the process to develop the Clean Water Plan. With some audiences, we **consulted** on equity considerations used for developing the Clean Water Plan and about how people want to engage in 2021.

Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic

We know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on everyone. We are changing the ways we communicate to reflect current and future health and safety needs. The world has changed in 2020, but our goal remains the same: to have an ongoing conversation with the community about clean water.

Due to COVID-19, King County's Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) is not currently hosting in-person meetings or events for the Clean Water Plan. However, WTD remains committed to sharing information and gathering feedback from community members. Starting in March 2020, the Clean Water Plan team hosted all program-related events, meetings, and materials virtually and shared online tools and print materials when requested. In late 2020, we asked the public how they want to engage with the project in 2021 and beyond. Asking this question will prepare us for more effective and meaningful outreach in 2021 as we plan for and launch a regional discussion around potential water quality investment strategies and a public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

2020 Engagement Goals

The Clean Water Plan team established the following engagement goals for 2020:

- **Provide a foundational understanding** of the Clean Water Plan that prepares the community to effectively engage in 2021 to provide input on the investment strategies and DEIS. Some key topic areas to cover include:
 - Why King County is developing a Clean Water Plan.
 - Actions, strategies, and evaluation framework.
 - How and why equity is being incorporated into the planning process.
- **Consult early** with community-based organizations on our engagement approach and have a robust discussion with them on how the Clean Water Plan should reflect equitable outcomes for all.
- **Demonstrate responsiveness** by showing the public that their input on community priorities has been incorporated into the Clean Water Plan process and reporting back on the SEPA scoping process.
- **Reach new audiences**, addressing gaps that have occurred to this point and adapting outreach.
- **Ask the community** how they wish to **engage** at this time, considering how the world and individual lives have changed and outreach should adapt.

Methods

King County performed several engagement efforts in 2020 to reach various audiences. The appendices that follow provide detailed information on each of these efforts.

Advisory Group: The Clean Water Plan Advisory Group was formed in early 2019 to advise King County on the Clean Water Plan. The Advisory Group is made up of representatives from regional organizations representing business, environmental advocacy, public health, academia, the regulatory community, and equity and social justice advocacy. This group convenes quarterly to advise King County on the planning process and on the best ways to engage and hear from key interests and constituencies.

Community-Based Organizations: The Clean Water Plan is engaging community-based organizations (CBOs) as trusted advocates in the community who are experts on the best ways to engage historically underrepresented populations in long-range planning processes. In 2020, the CBO Partnership Program hosted an orientation, capacity-building sessions, SEPA scoping learning sessions, learning circles, and workshops centered on equity in the planning process.

Government Affairs: Government affairs engagement in 2020 consisted of SEPA scoping coordination with tribal governments, briefings to the Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) and the Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC), and the convening of the MWPAAC Technical Advisory Task Force.

Wastewater Webinar: On March 25, 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.

SEPA Scoping: On May 20, King County issued a Determination of Significance and Request for Comments on the Scope of the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) scoping public comment period for the Clean Water Plan was open between May 20 and July 19, 2020.

Interest Group Meetings: Puget Soundkeeper Alliance and other environmental groups provided extensive comments during SEPA scoping in a joint letter. The Clean Water Plan team met with advocacy groups and stakeholders twice in 2020 to follow up on their comments and provide additional information about the planning process.

Community Questionnaire: In November 2020, King County launched an online and print questionnaire to seek community input on the best ways to engage with the Clean Water Plan in the months and years ahead.

Community Conversations: In late 2020, the Clean Water Plan team began contacting individuals from 26 organizations representing diverse communities and interests through informal phone discussions. Participants are providing King County with feedback about how they'd like to continue to engage with the project over the next year and which Clean Water Plan topics interest them most.

Next Steps

In 2021, King County will invite people to discuss the different alternative strategies for clean water investment. We will present the strategies for investing in the regional wastewater system and water quality to the region in several formats suitable for a variety of audiences. Associated public engagement will occur. In addition, SEPA review of the strategy alternatives will be performed and a DEIS will be issued along with a public comment period. Those comments will then be addressed in the final EIS. The Clean Water Plan team will continue informing and, at times, consulting with the community leading up to the presentation of the strategies and DEIS, and throughout the comment period. We do not yet know what 2021 will look like in terms of the pandemic, but King County remains committed to moving forward with engagement activities that are safe and inclusive.

Appendix A: Advisory Group

Overview

The Advisory Group continued to provide strategic guidance to the Clean Water Plan throughout 2020. The group met four times in 2020 to address and discuss key topics with the Clean Water Plan team. The goals of the Advisory Group include:

- Advise King County on the planning process to identify the most effective water quality investments the region can make.
- Advise King County on the ways to best engage and hear from key interests and constituencies throughout the region, including historically underrepresented groups.
- Provide insights and information related to the pressures, issues, and trends impacting constituencies and businesses throughout the region.
- Assist King County in understanding high-level implications, tradeoffs, and opportunities associated with the planning process.

The first four Advisory Group meetings took place in 2019. The Advisory Group then met four times in 2020. Highlights from those meetings are included below.

Meeting #5

Meeting #5 took place virtually on March 24, 2020. The meeting goals were to:

- Present and discuss the range of water quality outcomes and performance metrics King County intends to explore through the Clean Water Plan.
- Provide Advisory Group members with an overview of current WTD financial considerations within the Clean Water Plan context.

Milestones and activities to date

During this first session of the meeting, King County provided an overview of Clean Water Plan milestones and activities to date. King County staff walked members through the updated planning process timeline, indicating the current expectation that the planning process will wrap up in mid- to late- 2021 with the identification of a preferred alternative investment approach. Advisory Group members present at the meeting signaled their willingness to extend the group's charter (originally slating the group to end in the third quarter of 2020) to engage with King County through the middle of 2021.

As part of presenting the anticipated planning schedule, King County staff highlighted the intent to launch a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review process, with a SEPA Scoping Notice anticipated in May. King County staff explained the Scoping Notice will invite feedback on the different decision areas and related water quality investments under consideration in the planning process as well as the scope of the review in the environmental impact statement

(EIS). Advisory Group discussion signaled support for using SEPA (a programmatic EIS) for vetting the plan, though some members expressed confusion about how the Scoping Notice would be structured. King County staff indicated the intent to frame investment options more clearly and provide specific examples of investments under consideration.

Performance ranges and potential actions

To begin a conversation on the performance ranges and potential actions being considered under each key decision area, King County provided an overview of the performance ranges being explored as part of the process and provided examples of potential actions associated with each performance range. King County noted that the planning process, by design, is exploring a wide range of potential actions to inform the choices and tradeoffs the region faces in pursuit of wastewater treatment services and improved water quality. This approach contrasts deliberately with planning processes that establish specific goals and then evaluate alternatives for the most effective means to get there. The Clean Water Plan planning process reflects King County's recognition of the very complex and highly interdependent decisions it needs to make and the challenge of mixing and matching investments to produce the best overall outcomes.



During this overview, Advisory Group members asked clarifying questions about the scope of performance ranges and the associated potential actions.

WTD financial overview

In the final session of the meeting, King County provided an overview of the WTD financial context and Clean Water Plan considerations. The Clean Water Plan seeks to pull all currently defined investments together along with examining other potential investments over the coming decades. King County provided an overview on current revenues, expenditures, rates, and future potential water quality investments for the Advisory Group.

King County community affordability basics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WTD maintains strong bond ratings (Aa1, AA+) WTD currently carries 4B in outstanding debt Rating agencies designate WTD with strong ratings Maintaining favorable credit ratings is fundamental to overall financial sustainability of the utility
King County household affordability basics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual king county sewer rate for single family residents: ~\$544 Annual rate for those also paying capacity charge: ~\$1,318 Rate increases of 4.5% in 2021 and 2023 currently under discussion A general rule of thumb is that an additional \$1 million in annual revenue needs increases the King County monthly rate by approximately \$0.11.

In addition, King County noted that a critical element of the Clean Water Plan will be the evaluation of the financial requirements of the alternatives under consideration, as well as the impact these requirements will have on both household and community affordability. The specific methods for this evaluation are currently under development.

During the discussion, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) leadership noted that some of the highest income and lowest income communities regionally reside within King County. The Clean Water Plan anticipates examining options for mitigating household affordability to ensure that the impacts of decisions are considered and addressed across

the varied financial landscape of the community.

During the discussion, Advisory Group membership noted that the component agencies are also undergoing long-term planning during this time. This may mean that local rates will be increasing over the same period that is being considered under the Clean Water Plan. King County noted that they are committed to working with economists and forecasters to examine the combined impact of utility bills and impacts to affordability, today and in the future.

Meeting #6

Meeting #6 took place virtually on June 11, 2020. The meeting goals were to:

- Provide an overview of the evaluation framework.
- Present and discuss action evaluation categories and criteria.
- Provide a regional engagement update and receive feedback on options for future engagement.

During the first session of this meeting, King County provided an overview of the evaluation framework that will be used to explore the alternative investments for wastewater treatment services and regional water quality improvements. The Clean Water Plan alternative investments exploration process will include two steps: first, an evaluation of potential actions, and second, an evaluation of alternative strategies.

To begin a conversation on the approach being used to evaluate the performance of actions, King County provided an overview of the five categories that have been developed: water quality; cost; management and operations; community; and sustainability. King County noted

that each action will be explored using specific criteria related to each of the five evaluation categories.

Step 1: Action Evaluation – Analytical Approach Overview

Each action will be explored using specific criteria related to five evaluation categories:

- **Water Quality:** addresses action performance relative to a specified set of pollutant parameters (e.g., bacteria, nitrogen, PCBs) in regional waterbodies (e.g., Puget Sound, Lake Washington) and will seek to associate an action's pollutant reduction performance to ecological endpoints (e.g., Orca) and public health endpoints (e.g., contact recreation).
- **Cost:** addresses action performance relative to operations, maintenance, capital, and other costs on a full life-cycle cost basis.
- **Management and Operations:** addresses action performance relative to reliability and resilience, legal and regulatory obligations, and public confidence.
- **Community:** addresses action performance relative to construction impacts in neighborhoods, land use and economic development, and community livability.
- **Sustainability:** addresses action performance relative to energy use, carbon footprint, resource recovery, and ecosystem services.

The analysis will provide both a quantitative understanding of water quality and cost outcomes and a narrative understanding of management and operations, community, and sustainability outcomes for each action. Advisory Group members gave extensive feedback on

all the five categories that helped the Clean Water Plan team refine its approach and strategy moving forward.

Action evaluation: Equity implications

King County also provided an overview of their approach to incorporating equity into the evaluation, emphasized that the approach was still being refined, and expressed a desire to receive feedback from Advisory Group membership to refine and strengthen the approach. The Clean Water Plan equity analysis will be informed by the King County Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan. For the Clean Water Plan, WTD has identified six of the fourteen Determinants of Equity that have particularly high affinity relative to the actions under consideration, and these determinants act as a foundation for the ESJ evaluation criteria.

ESJ evaluations will help articulate how individual action might disproportionately burden or benefit communities for the equity conditions related to each category – now and in the future – rather than parsed out as its own category.



Specifically, equity outcomes will seek to characterize impacts of actions on communities that experience known disparities and have been historically underrepresented in public processes (e.g., communities of color and low-income populations). The Advisory Group members gave feedback and asked questions about community workforce, affordability, and tradeoffs that will help the Clean Water Plan team finalize its approach to incorporating equity into the evaluation process.

Meeting #7

Meeting #7 took place virtually on September 9, 2020. The meeting goals were to:

- Learn about the comments provided during the SEPA scoping period and share thoughts on using comments to help develop a water quality investment strategy.
- Review a sample of preliminary findings from action development and analysis, including notable systemwide impacts and analytical challenges, and provide feedback on how the findings will help inform the region on investment outcomes and, ultimately, water quality investment decision-making.
- Discuss key questions or information needed to frame strategies to inform community interests during the next phase of the planning process.

SEPA scoping comments

During the first session of this meeting, King County provided an overview of the number of scoping comments received, the nature of those comments, and the type of individuals and organizations that submitted comments. King County also provided an overview of the engagement strategy and approach for fall 2020. At the conclusion of this presentation, Advisory Group membership noted their continued desire to see public engagement include not only a discussion of the negative impacts, cost, and constraints associated with the actions that may be included in the Clean Water Plan, but also a desire to see opportunities and positive impacts discussed.

Action analysis

During this session, King County provided a reminder of the seven decision areas and approximately 35 actions that are being developed and evaluated to explore the range of potential options for investments in the regional wastewater system and water quality. Next, King County provided initial findings from ten of the actions across four decision areas: Asset Management, Resiliency, and Redundancy; Wastewater Conveyance; Wastewater Treatment; and Wet Weather Management. Group members gave feedback on all the areas.

Programmatic strategy formulation

In the last session, King County introduced the approach to formulating alternative programmatic strategies. King County provided an overview of the conceptual approach, which will move individual actions into groupings of actions that will create three to five distinct, comprehensive strategies. Group members gave detailed feedback about the approach.

Post-meeting follow-up

King County sent a follow-up email immediately after the meeting regarding a recent nitrogen removal study completed by the County and posted online. The draft [“King County Nitrogen Removal Study - Final Draft”](#) is an evaluation of nitrogen removal options and cost estimates for different levels of nitrogen removal for the King County regional treatment plants at their current capacities. This report was prepared so that King County could begin to understand what implementing nitrogen removal at the regional treatment plants could look like as the State of Washington prepares to implement new regulations. The Clean Water Plan wastewater treatment actions incorporate and build on the information from the Nitrogen Removal Study.

Meeting #8

The Clean Water Plan Advisory Group convened virtually on December 10, 2020 for their eighth meeting. At Meeting #8, Advisory Group members were provided an opportunity to review King County's emergent thinking on Clean Water Plan alternative strategies.

Advisory Group members provided feedback on the following:

- Opportunities and choices King County should highlight through the strategies.
- How to engage decision-makers and community members about these opportunities and choices.

Advisory Group members also heard details on how King County is scoping and analyzing actions by reviewing details for two example actions (related to asset management and nitrogen reduction) and provided feedback on how to show summary comparison performance data across the 35 actions. Finally, Advisory Group members learned about recent and upcoming regional engagement and communications activities, having been sent the [Regional Engagement: 2020 Year in Review](#) video prior to the meeting.

Next Steps

The Advisory Group will meet several times throughout 2021 as the Clean Water Plan team prepares the alternative strategies and engages with the region to explore these approaches to investing in the regional wastewater system and water quality.

Appendix B: Community-Based Organizations

Overview

The Clean Water Plan is engaging community-based organizations (CBOs) as trusted advocates in the community who are experts on the best ways to engage historically underrepresented populations in long-range planning processes. Underrepresented communities include Native peoples, communities of color, immigrant and refugee communities, limited-English-speaking communities, LGBTQIA¹, low-income populations, and people with disabilities, among others. These efforts will help develop a Clean Water Plan that reflects diverse perspectives and considers multiple needs, as well as helps to advance King County's equity and social justice goals by removing barriers to participation in the Clean Water Plan and welcomes new voices and longtime participants in water quality discussions.

Goals

- Address and remove barriers to participation by engaging historically underrepresented communities in King County's long-range planning process.
- Develop a Clean Water Plan that reflects diverse perspectives.

Approach

In 2019-2020, King County launched a pilot program where it partnered with six CBOs to participate in public engagement and outreach for the Clean Water Plan. King County encouraged partners to conduct outreach and engagement within their communities where they are, through culturally relevant and appropriate methods. Organizations were compensated up to \$10,000 for a 12-month period of engagement related to the Clean Water Plan. The six CBO partners are:

- **Casa Latina** is focused on community organizing around issues impacting domestic workers and day laborers specifically within Latinx communities.
- **InterIm CDA** is focused on low-income Asian and Pacific Islanders, immigrants, and refugees.
- **Living Well Kent** is focused on a healthier and more sustainable City of Kent.
- **Na'ah Illahee Fund** is focused on supporting and promoting the leadership of Indigenous women and girls in the ongoing regeneration of Indigenous communities.
- **Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle** is focused on economic opportunities and education for African American community.

¹ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual

Young Women Empowered is focused on serving diverse young women, ages 13 to 24, and adult women mentors in the greater Seattle area by offering mentorship and empowerment programs.

During the first year of the CBO partnership pilot, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the ability to engage with community members due to restrictions on in-person gatherings and demands placed on CBO capacity due to a global public health crisis and CBOs shifting priorities to meet the immediate and essential needs of communities.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Deepening or developing a long-term relationship between King County and CBO partners.
- Greater understanding and knowledge of the communities represented by CBO partners, their needs and interests related to the region's water quality.
- CBO partners and their communities gain a greater understanding of King County's current wastewater services and current and future trends facing the region's water quality.
- Specific input and feedback gathered by CBO partners for use in the development of the Clean Water Plan.

Kick-off Meeting

The CBO partnership held a kick-off meeting in person (prior to restrictions on in-person gatherings) before pivoting to all-virtual engagement with the partners in March. The kick-off meeting took place at Casa Latina and provided an opportunity for CBO partners to gather and meet each other and the Clean Water Plan team for the first time.

The kick-off started with a land acknowledgement, followed by introductions, an ice breaker activity, and a presentation that introduced King County's wastewater services and the purpose of the Clean Water Plan. The meeting was interactive, included questions and answers throughout the presentation, was attended by multiple representatives from organizations and included lunch.



WTD's Eunice Lee, presenting to CBO partners at the Clean Water Plan CBO kick-off meeting hosted at Casa Latina in early March 2020.

Community-Led Engagement

CBO partners implemented many events that featured the Clean Water Plan, including:

- STEM Day (Young Women Empowered)
- Student-produced video (Young Women Empowered)
- Video and online questionnaire (Urban League)
- SEPA commenting materials included in food boxes (InterIm CDA)
- Spanish-language sessions with domestic workers (Casa Latina)

CBO partners **Young Women Empowered** and **Urban League** created short videos that encouraged their communities to get engaged with the Clean Water Plan. The Urban League also created an [online questionnaire](#) that focused on people's relationship with Puget Sound, rivers, lakes, and streams, and what is important to them when thinking about the future of our water bodies. This questionnaire was linked at the end of the video and Urban League offered gift cards to the first 150 participants to encourage community members to complete the questionnaire. Both videos can be found on the Clean Water Plan online [library](#).

In fall of 2020, Urban League also promoted the Clean Water Plan's [short engagement questionnaire](#) by posting the questions on an online platform that allowed them to collect responses to share with the County. They also sent gift cards to the first 50 participants.

Young Women Empowered held a STEM day event in February 2020 (prior to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person gatherings), where middle-school-aged youth participated in interactive workshops designed to connect the youth with women of color working in STEM professions. King County staff led a workshop titled, "*Problem Solving for Clean Water*," where staff modeled the creation of wastewater and asked the participants to work in small groups as engineers to clean the dirty wastewater using tools provided like sponges, mesh nets, and cheesecloths. Approximately 80 students participated in the two workshop sessions. Three WTD engineers who identify as people of color and women participated and guided the students in the lab experiment. Afterwards, the WTD engineers spoke about their career journeys and experiences to encourage the youth to explore careers in STEM.

Casa Latina organized and led two virtual information sessions held in Spanish with domestic workers. The sessions were highly interactive and took place during evenings, with the first session providing an overview of the King County's wastewater utility and the services WTD provides, and the second session introducing the Clean Water Plan. During the second session, participants responded to the following questions:

- *How do you enjoy the Puget Sound and the rivers, lakes, and streams in our region?*

The top two responses were walking or exploring the beaches and looking at or picnicking near the water.

- *Over the next several decades, our region will spend billions of dollars to protect water quality. This will affect infrastructure, beaches, fish, jobs, seafood, and wildlife for future generations. King County will consider the region's priorities throughout the Clean Water Plan development process. Listed below are some of the priorities that we have heard in the initial conversations. Which of them is more important in your opinion?*

The top two responses were “protect water quality in rivers, lakes, streams and the Puget Sound” and “protect public health.”

Approximately 50 Latinx community members participated in the first session and 55 members participated in the second session. Participants asked questions about how issues of trash disposal and dumping impact the region’s waterways and drew connections to their workplace experiences using cleaning products, particularly with heightened concerns for health and safety during the pandemic.

Another partner, InterIm CDA, delivered groceries as part of their COVID-19 response to their community. King County provided translated materials on SEPA Scoping in Amharic, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, and Tagalog.

InterIm staff then inserted the translated materials in grocery bags to reach these communities who do not have access to the internet. Recipients could provide comment on SEPA Scoping and mail comments back to the Clean Water Plan through a prepaid mailer.

Capacity Building

CBO partnership goals include creating new resources that will strengthen organizations’ ability to engage effectively and meaningfully with their communities. Due to the pandemic causing all engagement to shift to virtual platforms, CBO partners requested more support with their digital engagement skills. In response, the Clean Water Plan team hosted the following digital capacity-building sessions in English and two sessions in Spanish, led by Resource Media:

- **Introduction to Zoom and Equitable Facilitation:** this first session was an introduction to using Zoom as a meeting space and shared ways to foster equitable participation, access, and decision-making on a virtual platform.
- **Digital Advocacy 101:** this second session provided a foundation in advocacy strategy and an overview of specific tools (subscription and free) such as online petitions, email marketing, and social media.

Feedback from CBO partners after these trainings highlighted the value of these training opportunities and indicated interest in more trainings of this nature in the future. CBO partners appreciate the tools and resources provided and mentioned that their staff would be able to apply those learned skills into their daily work.

SEPA Learning Sessions

Most CBO partners were unfamiliar with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and had not previously participated in providing public comment during a scoping period. To increase awareness and encourage CBO partners to participate, King County provided the following:

- One-hour virtual learning session that provided an introduction into the SEPA process.
 - Two staff from Interlm CDA shared their experience participating in other previous scoping periods as a peer-to-peer learning opportunity with fellow CBO partners.
- Informational handout that graphically illustrated the SEPA scoping process and included information on how to submit a formal scoping comment.
- Virtual meetings to inform undergraduate and graduate environmental studies students from Antioch University and Cascadia College about the scoping period and to solicit comments that were then submitted verbatim to King County.

Equity in the Clean Water Plan Events

Overview and purpose

On September 22 and October 12, 2020, King County hosted a two-part series of online meetings for community-based organizations (CBOs) and other engaged partners. The purpose of the meetings was to provide information about the process for developing the Clean Water Plan as well as regional clean water services and programs. Additionally, the Clean Water Plan team gathered input on how to consider equity in the Clean Water Plan development and evaluation process. The first session was primarily focused on orienting participants to the Clean Water Plan and collecting high-level feedback on wastewater and water quality issues. The second session was dedicated to actively collecting input and feedback on equity considerations.

Process

These sessions were held as part of the regional engagement strategy to ensure that communities' voices are informing the planning process. King County seeks to recognize and address the fair and just distribution of benefits and burdens to all affected parties and communities when outlining policies, programs, and projects for the future.

This approach looks at two aspects of the Clean Water Plan:

- How the planning process incorporates equity: this includes supporting greater participation of diverse groups in engagement and working with them to support greater representation, and then using the feedback received to help plan the process to achieve more equitable outcomes.

- Assessing the strategies under consideration, not only for benefits and burdens to communities of color and low-income communities, but also for opportunities to make the strategies more equitable in the first place.

Participants were compensated at a rate of \$75 per hour to attend the sessions to recognize their time and expertise. Underlying all of this is a recognition of the inequities that have persisted in the region and the fact that the Clean Water Plan needs to consider and mitigate these inequities.

Invitations and participation

King County extended invitations to the following organizations:

- Antioch University
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service
- Cascadia College
- Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition
- Environmental Professionals of Color, Seattle Chapter
- InterIm CDA
- King County SCAP Climate Equity Community Task Force
- Living Well Kent
- Na'ah Illahee Fund
- Planning in Color
- Protectors of the Salish Sea
- Urban League
- Young Women Empowered
- King County Open Space Equity Cabinet Members

Meeting #1: Format and content

The first event began with a welcome and a land and labor acknowledgement, as well as an overview of community agreements. Speakers then introduced themselves.

The meeting agenda was as follows:

- Orientation to Clean Water Plan
 - What King County Wastewater Treatment Division does
- How will equity be considered in the Clean Water Plan planning process?
 - What's been done so far
- Deeper dive: How might Clean Water Plan decisions affect equity and social justice?
 - What are we exploring in the plan?
- Next steps: Community engagement
 - Where we could use your expertise
- Open Q&A

The speakers began with an overview of the Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) and the services it provides for the region. They then explained the Clean Water Plan process, the purpose and need for the Clean Water Plan, and the anticipated schedule.

Presenters shared how equity and social justice (ESJ) has been a part of the planning process so far. They noted that we need a plan that will consider and mitigate historical and long-lasting impacts to communities.

Presenters shared information about the Clean Water Plan issue areas and explained how issues may be felt in inequitable ways within each of these areas. These include wastewater system issues, wet weather issues, pollution reduction issues, and financial issues.

What WTD Does: Paid for by you



Presentation slide illustrating WTD services

In the final portion of the presentation before general discussion and Q&A, presenters explained how input will be used. The topics, issues, and concerns raised by participants about equity will be considered as King County forms its strategies for addressing water quality. From here, King County will solicit broad public feedback on the strategies, including through a regional exploration of the strategies and public comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). After the Clean Water Plan is adopted, King County will continue to work toward equitable implementation with community input.

Meeting #1 feedback

Community impacts from wastewater treatment facilities: Participants asked several questions about how communities that live near treatment facilities are impacted. Presenters responded that some challenges include odor, traffic, and noise and these are managed to reduce or eliminate impacts; while advantages include job creation and economic opportunities for surrounding businesses, as well as the benefit that treatment facilities allow communities to grow and support increasing populations.

Wet weather concerns: Participants asked several questions about combined sewer overflows (CSOs). CSO considerations impact decisions about which projects are done first and where they will take place. Presenters noted that there are existing CSO regulations that direct King County to control overflows, and that consideration of CSOs is a part of the planning process. King County is continuing to work with its partners in controlling CSOs.

Green stormwater infrastructure and gentrification: Participants asked several questions about green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and potential environmental gentrification impacts. Presenters noted that the University of Washington has conducted research showing that GSI only caused a 3-5% increase in property values in north Seattle, and therefore GSI may be considered a welcome improvement for low-income communities and communities of color who may not have previously had access to green spaces. Some participants shared local examples of gentrification. Some participants expressed interest in increasing the funding available for

GSI investments among local community members, and concern about impacts from treatment facilities on low-income communities and communities of color, noting that displacement and livability issues can disproportionately impact those least likely to speak out.

Affordability: Some participants asked questions about the affordability of rates, and what existing support there is for low-income households.

Meeting #2: Format and content

The second event also began with a welcome and a land and labor acknowledgement, as well as an overview of community agreements. Speakers then introduced themselves.

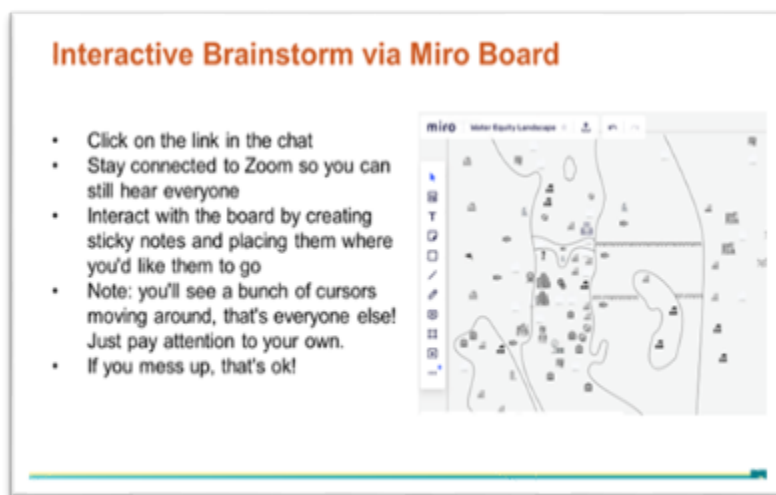
The meeting agenda included:

- Exercise 1: Landscape brainstorm of equity impacts
- Report-back of session 1 feedback
- How your input will be used
- Poll of Clean Water Plan topics
- Exercise 2: Deeper dive: Conversations on key Clean Water Plan topics
- How to stay involved

The bulk of this second meeting was dedicated to two interactive exercises. The first session invited participants to brainstorm equity impacts or benefits in the region. Participants were invited to select a place on a map and write text describing an equity impact that may occur in that part of King County's wastewater treatment service area. Participants then completed a poll that asked them which Clean Water Plan priority is most important to them.

The second brainstorming exercise mapped out a series of equity-related questions across an interactive map. Facilitators recorded live notes in the interactive map as participants offered responses to discussion prompts and posed follow-up questions. Those discussions are summarized in the following section.

The meeting included several sessions for questions and answers. Some themes from the discussion are below.



Presentation slide explaining the interactive brainstorm activity



Interactive brainstorming and discussion activity

Meeting #2 feedback:

Overall equity prompt: In response to the prompt, “Where are you seeing equity impacts or benefits in the region?” participants mentioned CSOs in the Duwamish River area, fecal issues at Seward Park, overflow into homes where people are financially disadvantaged, older pipes in the downtown area, and public health issues related to homelessness.

Pollution reduction and chemical bans: Participants discussed the equity impacts of chemical bans, which presenters noted can include a more expensive product replacement. Some participants emphasized the importance of outreach to educate the public about alternative products and ensuring that alternatives are easy to acquire. One participant noted that a product ban would benefit consumers and the state because a greater responsibility would be placed on industry. Participants expressed that outreach to community-based organizations is an important part of any effort to reduce pollution through personal decision-making.

Historical pollution: Participants said that some Latinx and southeast Asian communities that live around the Duwamish River are underinformed about the nature of the pollution there. Non-English speaking and immigrant communities tend not to be as aware of legacy pollution. Outreach materials that are only available in English omit these communities. Participants discussed the need for relational repair and noted that it is important to talk to Native American community organizations and learn from them.

Wet weather issues: Participants expressed that their perception of gentrification impacts from GSI can be location-dependent; for example, at schools, GSI may be viewed positively while within residential communities of color it may seem like gentrification. Some participants expressed support for more GSI at schools. Some expressed an interest in integrating GSI into communal spaces like parks and recreational areas, while others said that GSI would be desirable on rooftops and vertical green walls in dense areas.

The group discussed potential job opportunities associated with GSI and noted that Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) and immigrant populations should have a priority opportunity to obtain that work. Focused training opportunities and internships help facilitate that, as could partnering with local colleges. A pathway to citizenship could be another benefit of these jobs. Participants also discussed bioswales in the International District as a form of GSI that can help with the treatment of water runoff. Challenges included a long timeline; participants noted that more readily available financing would help neighborhoods to complete GSI projects. Maintenance is another challenge; participants discussed the idea that landscape maintenance could be done by paid contractors rather than volunteers. This could be a source of job creation for communities.

Wastewater systems: Participants discussed the value of infrastructure and noted that projects should avoid burdening marginalized communities (for example, odor concerns). One participant expressed an interest in more distributed treatment options via smaller facilities, somewhat analogous to distributed energy systems. One participant highlighted the Thornton Creek Water Quality Facility, noting that it alleviates stormwater runoff and provides a positive mixed-use space, and suggested this model could be implemented in low-income communities.

Finance: Participants shared that they believe most residents do not know where their money is going when they pay their bill, and that a brochure or website in multiple languages could help with education. Participants noted that a properly funded wastewater treatment system helps avoid interruptions of service and beach closures.

Issue ranking: Participants in the second meeting were asked to respond to the poll question, “Of the issues that the Clean Water Plan deals with, which one is the highest priority to you right now?” This was positioned to prioritize which topic to address first, acknowledging that the presentation team would touch on all of them. The poll results were:

- All equally important (50%)
- Pollution reduction (30%)
- Wet weather issues (20%)
- Finance (0%)
- Wastewater system (0%)

Opportunities for Collaborative Engagement

Public comments: During the SEPA scoping public comment period, a project representative of Young Women Empowered connected with an Advisory Group member from Washington Environmental Council to collaborate on ideas for submitting relevant scoping comments that centered Young Women Empowered’s equity priorities.

Advisory Group membership: An outgoing Advisory Group member from Front and Centered recommended Na’ah Ilahee Fund, one of the CBO partners, to replace the open seat on the Advisory Group.

Learning Circle

CBO partners participated in a learning circle session on December 10, 2020, that was facilitated and co-designed by consultant Alma Villegas. The goal of the learning circle was to evaluate and celebrate the first year of the CBO partnership pilot, gather lessons learned to incorporate into the second year of the partnership, and provide peer learning opportunities to CBO partners.

Through the evaluation survey and during the learning circle session, the Clean Water Plan team heard that CBO partners appreciated the flexibility and adaptability of the partnership and the support, engagement tools, and training the Clean Water Plan provided.

CBO partners highlighted capacity challenges to share information about the Clean Water Plan and to highlight relevance during the pandemic, racial protests, and economic crisis.

They also requested more digestible content, such as the right level of information and messaging about the Clean Water Plan to connect to their community's everyday needs and priorities. In addition, CBO partners also requested more capacity building and peer-sharing opportunities.

"I want to thank King County for investing into Casa Latina's community that helped to have a better understanding about the content and significance of the Clean Water Plan. The tools and resources offered were adapted to fit knowledge and experience of the Latinx immigrant community. Through this process, members of Casa Latina learned about wastewater system and were able to offer their informed opinion."

- Araceli Hernandez, Day Worker Center Director, Casa Latina

Appendix C: Government Affairs

Overview

Government affairs outreach in 2020 consisted of coordination with the Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) and the Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC). More information about tribal engagement activities is available in the SEPA scoping section of this summary.

Goals

King County's goals for the 2020 government affairs outreach efforts included:

- Continue to build open communications and strong and productive working relationships with appropriate representatives in each committee.
- Keep leaders informed about the process and offer the opportunity to provide input.

Methods

Throughout 2020, MWPAAC continued to receive regular, short updates at their monthly meetings and held a longer discussion on the Clean Water Plan in August 2020. The MWPAAC Executive Board spearheaded the formation of the MWPAAC Clean Water Plan Technical Task Force to provide a forum for MWPAAC members to dive more deeply into aspects of the Clean Water Plan. The task force met five times in 2020 and provided reports back to the full MWPAAC. They will continue to meet in 2021. Updates at MWPAAC general meetings occurred on the following dates in 2020:

- January 22
- February 26
- March 25
- April 29
- May 27
- June 24
- August 26
- September 23
- October 28
- December 9

Due to scheduling issues and COVID-19, the Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) only met four times in 2020. They received a briefing on the Clean Water Plan at their last meeting of 2019 and at their July 2020 meeting. They received a status briefing at the December 9 RWQC meeting.

Next Steps

Workshops for elected officials will be convened in 2021 to provide foundational information and plan development details in preparation for policy discussions and decision-making. RWQC is expected to take up the Clean Water Plan as a topic in more depth in 2021. The MWPAAC Clean Water Task Force will continue to meet in 2021 and MWPAAC will continue to receive monthly briefings.

Appendix D: Wastewater Webinar

Overview

On March 25, 2020, King County hosted a lunchtime educational webinar, which was designed to inform the public about the existing conditions in the wastewater treatment system and highlight areas for decision-making for the Clean Water Plan. The webinar was an opportunity to share technical planning information with the community in a public-friendly and accessible way.

Goals

The webinar provided participants with an opportunity to:

- Learn about the realities the current wastewater system is facing.
- Understand factors the Clean Water Plan needs 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.

Approach

The event began with a welcome and Indigenous land acknowledgement.

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 the Clean Water Plan is developed, including:

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



Presentation slide illustrating the trends shaping our region's future

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

Participation

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.

Throughout the presentation, participants submitted more than 55 individual questions and comments. The Clean Water Plan 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.

Key Outcomes

- **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 Clean Water 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 Clean Water Healthy Habitat and the Strategic Climate Action Plan.
- **Regional engagement:** Many participants asked about how the Clean Water Plan team is working with the greater King County community throughout the planning process.
- **Technical details:** Several people requested more information on specific topics, such as King County wastewater rates, gray water use, landfills, stormwater projects, and combined sewer overflows.

Appendix E: State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Scoping

Overview

The purpose of SEPA scoping is to establish and confirm the focus of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by seeking input from agencies, tribal governments, and members of the public on the content and emphasis—or scope—of the EIS. Scoping also provides notice to the public and other agencies that an EIS is being prepared, and typically initiates their involvement in the EIS process.

An EIS is a document that provides impartial, comprehensive discussion of a project's potential significant adverse impacts, reasonable alternatives, and proposed measures to avoid or minimize impacts. A programmatic EIS provides decision-makers with information to consider in making decisions, policy changes, and approval decisions. It does not constitute a decision or approval on its own. An EIS is not a cost-benefit analysis for a plan or project; rather, an EIS provides environmental information to be considered alongside economic and other policy considerations in reviewing actions that could significantly affect the environment.

King County began SEPA scoping for the Clean Water Plan in May 2020 when WTD issued a [Determination of Significance \(DS\)/Scoping Notice](#) for the Clean Water Plan. The DS was issued because WTD, as the lead agency, determined the Clean Water Plan to likely have significant adverse environmental impacts, and has initiated the EIS process. The scoping notice included a general summary of the proposed actions for the Clean Water Plan, as well as ways to provide comments. Information obtained from the public comments will be used to help WTD in framing the scope of the environmental review and in choosing the elements of the environment and alternatives to be evaluated in the SEPA EIS.

Notification

King County notified the public of the SEPA scoping comment period (and, later, the extension of the comment period deadline) through several methods:

- Email notification to 5,000 subscribers
- Email notification to 600 King County employees
- Email notification shared with organizations to forward to their memberships
- Clean Water Plan website (on both the [English](#) and [Spanish](#) web pages)
- Social media posts (provided in both Spanish and English). WTD boosted the Spanish-language Facebook post to people who speak or read Spanish in 94 different zip codes across the WTD service area.
- Legal ad posted in *The Seattle Times* on May 20, 2020.

The scoping notice, available on the Clean Water Plan website, was translated into 12 different languages: Amharic, Arabic, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Korean, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tigrigna, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.

Approach

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, King County was not able to conduct in-person activities for SEPA Scoping.

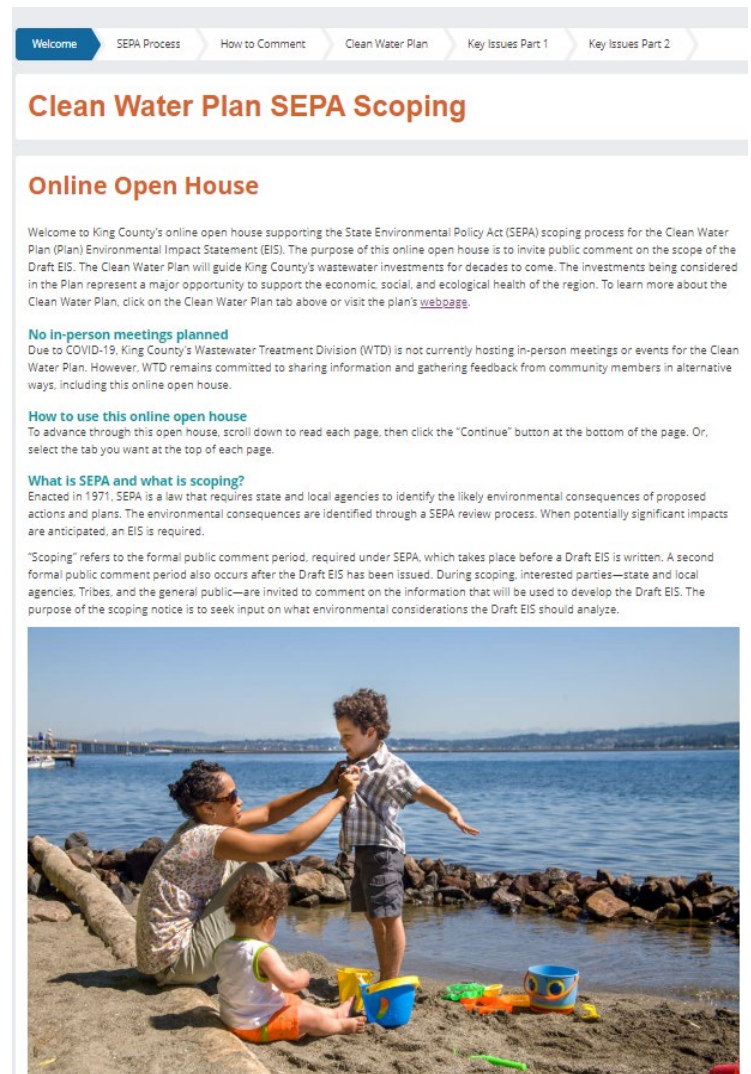
King County used the following outreach tools to support the SEPA scoping comment period:

- Notification
- Online open house
- Community-based organization engagement
- Tribal government briefings
- Committees and Advisory Group updates

Online open house

King County launched a SEPA scoping online open house on May 20, 2020, in coordination with the start of the SEPA scoping comment period. The purpose of the online open house was to provide the public with a clear description of the SEPA process and why it is important, instructions on how to comment, and information on the Clean Water Plan and key issues King County is considering. It was offered in both English and Spanish, with the ability to select additional languages through Google Translate.

The online open house was visited by more than 3,000 participants; 900 of those participants visited the Spanish-language version. Most visitors reached the online open house through the King County email notification, the King County website, and Twitter and Facebook. Fourteen people signed up to receive Clean Water Plan email updates.



Welcome to King County's online open house supporting the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) scoping process for the Clean Water Plan (Plan) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The purpose of this online open house is to invite public comment on the scope of the Draft EIS. The Clean Water Plan will guide King County's wastewater investments for decades to come. The investments being considered in the Plan represent a major opportunity to support the economic, social, and ecological health of the region. To learn more about the Clean Water Plan, click on the Clean Water Plan tab above or visit the plan's [webpage](#).

No in-person meetings planned
Due to COVID-19, King County's Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) is not currently hosting in-person meetings or events for the Clean Water Plan. However, WTD remains committed to sharing information and gathering feedback from community members in alternative ways, including this online open house.

How to use this online open house
To advance through this open house, scroll down to read each page, then click the "Continue" button at the bottom of the page. Or, select the tab you want at the top of each page.

What is SEPA and what is scoping?
Enacted in 1971, SEPA is a law that requires state and local agencies to identify the likely environmental consequences of proposed actions and plans. The environmental consequences are identified through a SEPA review process. When potentially significant impacts are anticipated, an EIS is required.

"Scoping" refers to the formal public comment period, required under SEPA, which takes place before a Draft EIS is written. A second formal public comment period also occurs after the Draft EIS has been issued. During scoping, interested parties—state and local agencies, Tribes, and the general public—are invited to comment on the information that will be used to develop the Draft EIS. The purpose of the scoping notice is to seek input on what environmental considerations the Draft EIS should analyze.

The online open house launched on May 20. It was available in English and Spanish.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) online meeting: The Clean Water Plan is partnering with CBOs, trusted advocates in the community, to engage historically underrepresented populations in WTD's long-range planning. On May 8, prior to the SEPA scoping comment period, King County held an online meeting that was attended by four of the CBO partners. Partner representatives discussed how to participate in the Clean Water Plan EIS scoping public comment period and sought to learn from CBO colleagues who have previously participated in SEPA. The Clean Water Plan team provided a one-page SEPA scoping informational handout for CBO partners to use as a resource tool.

CBO materials packets: To reach communities who do not have web access, King County delivered 300 printed packets of Clean Water Plan materials to InterIm CDA on June 10. These materials were enclosed in food boxes distributed to seniors. The materials included a print version of the SEPA online open house, a comment form, and a self-addressed envelope with paid postage.

CBO SEPA scoping online learning sessions: In July, King County hosted two 1-hour SEPA online learning sessions to engage youth and underrepresented populations. Antioch University and Cascadia College graduate and undergraduate programs and alumni of environmental studies programs were invited to participate. The invitation was also extended to the Environmental Professionals of Color, Seattle Chapter.

The first meeting, on July 11, introduced the Clean Water Plan. About 12 people virtually participated in the meeting. At the second meeting on July 14, the Clean Water Plan collected SEPA Scoping comments and other input about the Plan. About eight people participated in the second session. In alignment with King County's Office of Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, each participant in the July 11 and 14 meetings received \$75 in compensation for their time and expertise.

Tribal government briefing

On May 13, the Clean Water Plan hosted an online briefing for tribal governments. The purpose of the briefing was to provide information about the process for developing the Clean Water Plan as well as regional clean water services and programs, and to introduce, in advance of the SEPA scoping notice comment period, the key issues and potential actions that will be explored as part of the SEPA process. King County extended invitations to representatives of five tribal governments: Muckleshoot, Puyallup, Snoqualmie, Suquamish, and Tulalip. One or more representatives from the Puyallup, Snoqualmie, Squamish, and Tulalip governments attended the briefing.

Committees and Advisory Group updates

During the SEPA scoping comment period, King County updated the following audiences on the Clean Water Plan and SEPA process:

- **Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC):** Clean Water Plan team members provided an update to MWPAAC's Clean Water Plan Technical Task Force on May 21 and an update to the MWPAAC General Meeting on May 27.
- **Regional Water Quality Committee:** On July 1, project managers for the Clean Water Plan updated the committee on the Clean Water Plan's process and progress, highlighting SEPA scoping along the way.
- **Clean Water Plan Advisory Group:** During the March 24 and June 11 virtual meetings held on March 24 and June 11, King County informed the Advisory Group of the SEPA scoping comment period.

Key Outcomes

A total of 371 different comments were received during the scoping period. Of this number, 25 comments were submitted directly via mail or email; 346 other email comments were based on a form letter submitted through a third-party link. The 25 direct comments included nine that were submitted on behalf of two tribes, multiple public utilities, and various community advocacy and environmental organizations, with the remaining 16 comments submitted by individuals.

Comments addressed several topic areas: protecting water quality, fish and wildlife, environmental health, public services, and utilities, as well as socioeconomics, environmental justice, and tribal rights. Further details about comments are available in the [SEPA Scoping Summary online](#).

Next Steps

King County anticipates that the Draft EIS will be published in 2021. Agencies, affected tribes, and the public will have an opportunity to review and comment on the content of the document. King County will host an extensive public notification process to solicit comments on the Draft EIS. After the Draft EIS comment period, King County will prepare the Final EIS, which will identify a preferred alternative for the Clean Water Plan.

Appendix F: Interest Group Meetings

Overview

Puget Soundkeeper Alliance and other environmental groups provided extensive comments in a joint letter during the SEPA scoping comment period. The Clean Water Plan team met with Puget Soundkeeper Alliance, Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition, Zero Waste Washington, and the Washington Environmental Council twice in 2020 to follow up on their comments. Meetings occurred on September 14, 2020 and November 10, 2020.

Summary and Key Themes

Participants said several issues that the Clean Water Plan is exploring should not create tradeoffs, or “*either/or*” scenarios. Instead, they encouraged King County to strive for “*both/and*” options. Participants said financing issues, including costs, rates, and affordability, should not be a barrier to “*both/and*” options. Participants suggested the approach Clean Water Plan planning process is taking—use current rate structures to build strategies and explore costs and affordability outcomes—might force unnecessary tradeoffs among water quality investments.

Equitable rate structure: Instead, participants suggested the planning process start by developing a more equitable rate structure in which people with higher incomes pay more for water quality investments than people with lower incomes. Participants expressed concern about cost of living increases in the region, particularly housing affordability, and the role utility rates play in that.

Timing with other efforts: Participants said any actions that change the timing of investments along the Duwamish River must be timed with and supportive of the Superfund cleanup activities. They specifically referred to the actions that affect the timing of the CSO program and the “accelerated sediment management,” suggesting that changes to these programs may be out of sync with the Superfund cleanup schedule, which involves many partners. They asked about King County’s commitment to cleaning up the Duwamish River. One participant suggested the Duwamish River should be King County’s highest priority and that it appears the Clean Water Plan is looking at other priorities as an excuse not to deal with issues along the river. Participants suggested that equity and social justice should be part of the planning process from the beginning. They specifically expressed concern about gentrification in the South Park and Georgetown communities. Participants asked that their comments be shared with King County department and division leadership.

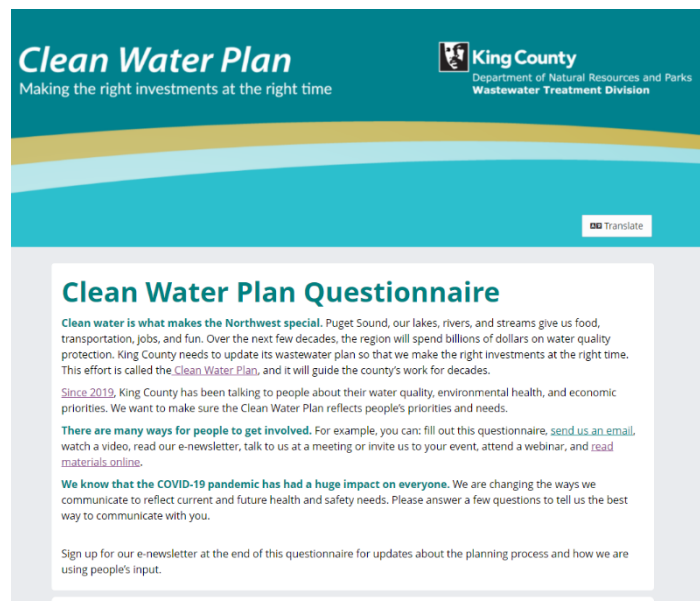
Appendix G: Community Questionnaire

Overview

In November 2020, the Clean Water Plan team launched a short public questionnaire to collect feedback on how communities wish to engage in 2021. The team understands that the world and individual lives have changed drastically because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and King County must adapt engagement practices accordingly.

The short questionnaire is hosted on PublicInput.com and linked from project materials through the end of 2020 and into 2021. The questionnaire is available in the following languages:

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Simplified Chinese
- Traditional Chinese
- Korean
- Oromo
- Russian
- Somali
- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Tigrigna
- Ukrainian
- Vietnamese



The Clean Water Plan team also created a print version of the questionnaire to be distributed by CBO partners through food box programs and other socially distant outreach efforts. The questionnaire was made available on the Clean Water Plan website, launched through the project's e-newsletter, and shared through social media in English, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Chinese (Simplified). It was shared with Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC) and jurisdictional partners, as well as the Advisory Group.

Results

At the time this summary was published, the questionnaire was still open to the public. Questionnaire results will be available later in spring 2021.

Appendix H: Community Conversations

Overview

In fall 2020, the Clean Water Plan team launched a new round of “community conversations” with a select group of individuals and organizations. The purpose of these conversations is to assess their level of interest in the Clean Water Plan, to understand how people wish to engage in 2021 (and at what capacity), and to provide an update about the progress on the Clean Water Plan. The team seeks to speak with about 26 organizations with a variety of affiliations and representation, including labor, Native and Indigenous, race and social justice, youth and student, disability rights, and environmental advocacy.

Goals

- Understand the level of interest in the Clean Water Plan among a varied group of individuals and organizations, especially considering the impacts of COVID-19, the economic downturn, and the increase in and awareness of overt acts of racism, hate, and bias.
- Identify new engagement tools so that those who wish to engage with the Clean Water Plan can do so in a way that meets their needs and expectations.
- Strengthen or build new Clean Water Plan relationships with specific groups and individuals.
- Identify wastewater-related needs and priorities of specific groups and individuals and assess how current needs and priorities align with what has been heard previously about water quality-related priorities.

Approach

The conversations are led by representatives from the Clean Water Plan team, as well as community-based organizations, to foster a more open and trusting dialogue. The CBO partners are conducting conversations with specific groups where they already have long-standing relationships. Participants are offered compensation for their time and knowledge.

These community conversations are encouraged to be informal and free flowing. Questions will follow these general themes:

- How has COVID-19 changed whether you could get involved in projects such as the Clean Water Plan?
- Are you interested in getting involved? If so, how? Which Clean Water Plan topics most interest you and your community?
- How have marginalized communities been impacted by issues such as the quality of water in our region’s rivers, lakes, and Puget Sound; access to fishing, cultural practices, and recreation; or ratepayer affordability?

- What's your experience, or how familiar are you with topics such as: recycled water, biosolids, septic tank conversions, legacy pollution, chemicals in products, the cultural uses of water, and what happens to wastewater that goes down the drain?
- What do you think are some barriers to understanding and engaging in these issues?
- How can we create incentives for people to get more active and engaged around planning for and providing input into these issues?
- What are some of the key issues and sentiments that your community have about these issues? What additional information would people want to know about King County's potential direction?

Next Steps

Conversations began in mid-December and will continue through winter 2021. The Clean Water Plan team will produce a summary of key themes and outcomes of those conversations. The summary will be posted on the Clean Water Plan webpage.