

Clean Water Plan Advisory Group

Meeting #1 Summary

Background

The King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) has convened the Clean Water Plan Advisory Group to:

- 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, trade-offs, and opportunities associated with the planning process.

The first meeting of the Clean Water Plan Advisory Group took place on May 13, 2019 at the County's King Street Center offices. Meeting 1 objectives were to:

- Create a comfortable space for engaged discussions among all Advisory Group members.
- Facilitate a discussion for Advisory Group members to get to know each other.
- Familiarize Advisory Group members with the Clean Water Plan process and obtain their feedback.

DNRP has charted the Advisory Group to support Phase 1 of the planning process, and the Advisory Group is anticipated to hold six to seven meetings and complete its work by September 2020. All materials for the May 13th Advisory Group can be found via this [link](#).

This meeting summary provides non-attributed highlights from the presentations and discussions at the meeting. The summary also includes perspectives provided by Advisory Group members who missed the meeting but provided input as part of follow-up calls conducted by Clean Water Plan process support staff.

Opening Remarks

Christie True, Department of Parks and Natural Resources (DNRP), and Mark Isaacson, Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) Director opened the meeting by setting the context for the Clean Water Plan planning process, as well as the role to be played by the Advisory Group in the process. Christie and Mark indicated:

- ▶ The County anticipates it will spend in the range of \$2.5-\$7 billion on water quality projects in the coming years, which includes making CSO-driven investments.
- ▶ The County seeks to ensure that these investments produce the best overall water quality and other benefits for the region.
- ▶ The planning process will be undertaken across a large and complex region ranging from the foothills of the Cascade Mountains to densely populated urban areas – this makes for a very challenging planning context.
- ▶ There are a variety of challenges and important trends that the plan will need to address and balance including: maintaining ~ \$5 billion in aging clean water infrastructure; providing for the resiliency of clean water investments in the context of climate change pressures; responding to more stringent regulatory requirements; and keeping pace with population growth and demographic shifts predicted for the region.

Advisory Group Member Introductions & Initial Observations

An important objective of this first meeting was to create an opportunity for Advisory Group members to better get to know each other. To do so, Advisory Group members were asked to share their perspectives on the regional water quality interests that the Clean Water Plan needs to address. Advisory Group member observations included the following.

- To effectively address the water quality needs and interests of the region, the plan will need to take a long-term view and be oriented around a “One Water” perspective (referring to a planning context that will consider the entire water cycle).
- The importance of recognizing the role of retrofitting existing infrastructure and current land uses, as well as influencing the way new development takes place.
- Maintaining awareness and a focus on the important link between water quality and public health.
- The plan, given its scope and link to substantial water quality investments, has an opportunity to draw on and influence research and technology innovation.
- Recognizing that King County has been a leader in addressing water quality challenges creating a strong foundation for it to move ahead with this plan – this context sets up the opportunity for the County to be a model for other jurisdictions that face similar challenges.
- The importance of centering the planning process on historically underrepresented populations with the intent to recognize and correct for historical distributional equity disparities.
- Undertaking the planning process in a manner that creates opportunity for all constituencies and interests in the County to be part of the solution – recognize and draw on the positive intent that each Advisory Group member and their related constituencies bring to the table.
- Seek opportunities to produce multiple benefits from the investments the County will be making – this will require understanding community priorities and applying them to the investment decisions the County will make.
- Business as usual (that is, building the plan consistent with current water quality program and investment practice) will be insufficient to address the Region’s water quality challenges and meet its water quality aspirations. An integrated planning approach addressing holistic solutions will be needed.
- It is important to recognize that, although clean water may be available, some members of the community may not have access to it – access to clean water needs to be a key consideration for the plan.

- Population growth, in contrast to land use, appears to be a major driver of new clean water investment needs, recognizing that the planning process will explore a variety of trends and drivers to best understand implications for water quality and needed investments.

County Presentations: Planning & Engagement Processes

Steve Tolzman, Clean Water Plan Program Manager, Tiffany Knapp, Planning Project Manager, and Sonia-Lynn Abenojar, Regional Engagement Project Manager, provided briefings on the planning methodology and the intended framework for the regional engagement process (see briefing packet at this [link](#)). Highlights from these presentations include the following.

Scenario Planning

The fundamental question the planning process will address is:

“What is the most appropriate path to ensure we direct the right public investments to the right actions at the right time for the best water quality outcomes”?

DNRP will undertake the planning process in two phases:

Phase I: Where we want to go and why?

- Identify a strategic direction for regional investments in water quality

Phase II: What actions will we take to get there?

- Identify set of actions and activities – policies, programs, projects – and implementation plan

Phase 1 of the plan – slated to complete work in late 2020 – will use a scenario planning methodology geared to inform a sense of the region’s preferred water quality future and explore challenges, tradeoffs, uncertainties, and opportunities.

Scenario planning provides a platform for:

- Exploring multiple approaches before over-investing in research and modeling of one approach”.
- Creating space for new ideas and future possibilities;
- Building understanding and exploring assumptions about what is certain and uncertain;
- Capturing and defining different trends to see risks and opportunities; and
- Understanding interdependencies among social, environmental, and economic drivers, not just technical, data-driven ones.

Regional Engagement

The regional engagement approach is structured around five pillars of activity:

1. **External Advisory Group** – providing strategic advice to King County on a quarterly basis;
2. **Focused Engagement** – in-person engagement at key planning milestones with new and existing interested parties;
3. **Broad Engagement** – general community outreach through an on-line open house, public surveys, website, media advertising, and engaging community members where they are located.
4. **Youth Engagement** – a mix of workshops, surveys, in-school program events, and treatment plant tours to strengthen their voice in public processes.

5. **Tailored Engagement** – focused on Tribal Governments, other elected officials, and regulators.

Advisory Group Q&A

The final portion of the meeting focused on an opportunity for Advisory Group members to ask questions and share perspectives about the planning and engagement processes. Key highlights from this discussion follow below.

- The time scale for the planning process will be 40 years, reflecting the need to take a long-term view given the scale and lifespan of the clean water investments that can be anticipated emerging from the plan. (answer provided in response to a question about time scale for the plan)
- An important consideration for the plan will be the role of transformative technology and the ability of King County to influence the technology marketplace given the anticipated scale of investment. The scenarios framing effort can create an opportunity to explore the role of technology innovation.
- The plan will utilize an adaptive management approach with “triggers and mileposts” established as part of the scenarios and related strategic response formulation efforts. The County will monitor these triggers and mileposts to understand needs and opportunities for adapting plan strategies. (answer provided in response to a question about the role adaptive management would play in the plan)
- The County Executive has been a driver for undertaking this planning process, and the King County Council will ultimately need to approve the plan and authorize the budget for it. (answer provided in response to a question about the role of the King County Council in adopting the plan)
- Equity and social justice, consistent with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, will be incorporated into scenario framing to ensure the plan centers on distributional equity and related considerations. Other plans, such as the Climate Action Agenda, also will be incorporated into the scenario framing process. (answer provided in response to two questions: will equity and social justice be a foundational element in the plan; and will climate change also have a foundational role in the plan?)
- The planning process can provide an opportunity to explore in what ways and where we have failed over the last 40 years – the plan is an opportunity to learn from the past. (answer provided in response to the question “can we explore where we have failed over the past 40 years”?)
- When considering how best to deliver water quality benefits, existing jurisdictional responsibilities and boundaries will not be barriers to exploring opportunities. (answer provided in response to the question “how will existing jurisdictional boundaries and responsibilities (e.g., stormwater) be factored into this planning effort”?)
- Funding is within the scope of this planning effort, with, in particular, Phase 2 of the planning process developing an implementation plan and related funding requirements. (answer provide in response to a question about how funding will be considered in the plan)
- DNRP anticipates there will be between four and six future scenarios considered during the planning process and that some common elements will likely exist across these scenarios. (answer provided in response to a question regarding the amount and nature of scenarios)
- Concern was raised that DNRP had not made a sufficiently compelling case of the relevance of the plan to certain highly impacted communities – this deficiency can be anticipated to hinder regional engagement efforts to reach historically underrepresented communities.

- It was suggested that engagement with public and private land managers (e.g., transportation departments, land developers, large landowners) will be important given their role in managing various sources of water quality pressures.

Attendees

Advisory Group

NAME	TITLE	Organization
Aiko Schaefer	Executive Director	Front and Centered
Anne Udalo	Board Member	League of Women Voters
Ben Packard	Executive Director	Earthlab, University of Washington
Bud Nicola	Affiliate Professor	University of Washington
Heather Bartlett	Water Quality Program Manager	Ecology
Heather Sheffer	Environmental Strategy	Boeing
Jeff Clarke	General Manager	MWPAAC - Alderwood Water and Wastewater District
Jessie Israel	Puget Sound Director	The Nature Conservancy
Josh Brown	Executive Director	Puget Sound Regional Council
Leslie Webster	Drainage and Wastewater System Planning Program Manager	MWPAAC - Seattle Public Utilities
Monty Anderson	Building Trades Board Member	King County Labor Council/Building Trades
Patricia Akiyama	External Relations Manager	Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties

King County Staff

NAME	TITLE	Organization
Christie True	DNRP Director	King County
Josh Baldi	Water & Land Resources Division Director	King County
Mark Isaacson	Wastewater Treatment Division Director	King County
Sonia-Lynn Abenojar	Regional Engagement Project Manager	King County
Steve Tolzman	Clean Water Program Manager and Planning Project Manager	King County
Tiffany Knapp	Clean Water Planning Project Manager	King County

Facilitators

NAME	TITLE	Organization
Rob Greenwood	Advisory Group Facilitator	Ross Strategic
Sarah Shadid	Advisory Group Facilitator	Ross Strategic