

Clean Water Plan Advisory Group

Meeting #2 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.

DNRP has chartered 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. The second meeting of the Clean Water Plan Advisory Group took place on July 24, 2019 at the County's King Street Center offices. Meeting 2 objectives were to:

- Review and obtain input on community Clean Water Plan priorities and significant trends with substantial potential to impact regional water quality and its management.
- Obtain advice on how King County can best advance understanding and set the stage for effective problem solving across the community related to our region's water quality management challenges.

In advance of the meeting, Advisory Group members were provided a Briefing Document that summarized the emergent Regional Priorities and initial findings on Significant Trends that will be used to inform the Clean Water Plan process. All materials for the July 24th 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) Director, and Mark Isaacson, Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) Director opened the meeting with a welcome and took a few minutes to explain the background specifics on the circumstances that led to an emergency bypass at

the West Point Treatment Plant and to provide a few clarifications on the news regarding WTD operations on the weekend of July 20, 2019.

In response to clarifying questions from an Advisory Group member about the charter, the DNRP Director stated that while drinking water (including quality and supply) is not included in the scope of the planning effort, any implications of the Clean Water Plan to drinking water management, including those to source water, would be considered in the planning process. Before moving into general discussion, time also was taken to introduce Advisory Group members attending meetings for the first time. These members were provided an opportunity to share their key interests relative to the Advisory Group charge.

Priorities: Advisory Group Feedback

The Clean Water Plan will use Regional Priorities to better understand the tradeoffs of the investment pathways formulated to address future water quality management needs. At the time of the July 24th meeting, seven emergent Regional Priorities had been identified from both King County's foundational principles and regional outreach activities and were included in the briefing document for Advisory Group review. Advisory Group members provided feedback on the way the priorities could be improved.

Protect our Waterways, Lakes, and Puget Sound – The recreational, cultural, and commercial uses of our waters are vital to the quality of life in our region

- Advisory Group discussion signaled the need to strike an effective balance between protection and restoration to adequately protect waterways, lakes, and Puget Sound. Discussion indicated an interest in a phased approach, with emphasis initially placed on prevention, to avoid additional environmental degradation. Advisory Group members noted that while the County has done comparatively well in the prevention of additional negative impacts, important portions of the Puget Sound do not have active or effective stormwater management or regulation programs. This condition, and a multitude of other individual impacts (e.g., septic tanks), result in ongoing damage to the region's water quality. Advisory Group members indicated that it would be helpful for the County to articulate what "protect" means for their staff, technical assistance programs, and the development and implementation of non-regulatory tools.
- Discussions indicated that it would be helpful to amend the priority to read, "Protect *and* Restore our Waterways, Lakes, and Puget Sound."

Support a Healthy Ecosystem – Protect and enhance critical habitat and species

- Advisory Group members signaled that this priority could be strengthened with a clearer articulation of what ecosystem health indicators will be used to measure the protection and restoration of critical habitats and species.
- Advisory Group members discussed the importance of acknowledging and understanding the history of indigenous peoples on this land and their relationship to the natural environment as a key step in understanding what elements make up a healthy ecosystem. It was noted that the indigenous peoples buried in this land are now a part of the trees and the air, and Advisory Group members signaled that addressing water quality is only one part of a larger picture which includes the land, the trees, and the humans in the region.

Further Equity and Social Justice – Help address historical inequities related to water quality programs, policies, and projects

- Advisory Group members indicated broad support for this priority but stressed that priorities of this type often fall short in translation from intent to execution and require meaningful, ongoing engagement with communities to be successful.
- Discussions indicated that tribal treaty rights, currently listed under this priority, should be included under a more appropriate priority, given the legal nature of tribal treaty rights.
- Advisory Group members expressed an interest in the County developing a more refined understanding of how community priorities vary across a wide variety of demographics (e.g., age, gender, politics) to better understand community sentiment and support for clean water.
- Advisory Group members signaled a willingness to provide additional support to the County in the development of tactics for effectively engaging underrepresented communities.

Leverage Integrated, Collaborative, and Interagency Approaches – Enlist a full range of partners to address the complex water quality and ecosystem challenges the region faces

- Advisory Group members expressed support for the inclusion of this priority and highlighted that successful water quality management requires engagement across a complex and layered jurisdictional context.
- Discussions indicated that given the impactful nature of nuisance flooding on communities, it should be given greater emphasis as an important element of an integrated approach.

Target Greatest Water Quality Benefit – Direct resources to the most productive water quality (and overall community) investments that support affordability of services

- Advisory Group members expressed concern at the inclusion of affordability as part of this priority, as investments in water quality benefits may place pressure on affordability goals. Advisory Group members recommended that affordability be recategorized under a different priority or included as a standalone priority.
- Advisory Group members signaled a desire to see a greater emphasis placed on the benefits that ecosystem health can provide to humans.

Prevent Pollution at the Source – Favor approaches that avoid polluting water resources

- Throughout the meeting, Advisory Group members expressed support for prioritizing pollution prevention at the source as an important supplement or alternative to end of pipe interventions.
- Advisory Group members emphasized the importance of effective stormwater management as a key element in preventing pollution.

Ensure Robust Engagement – Invest in early and sustained community engagement to create buy-in and provide feedback to create a stronger Clean Water Plan

- Advisory Group members expressed interest in further refining the above priorities through tailored engagement with historically underrepresented groups to ensure priorities are reflective of a full range of community interests.
- Advisory Group discussions signaled an interest in additional granularity for priorities and recommended that the County work to understand how unique priorities may emerge for different

demographics such as indigenous communities, low-income communities, immigrant and refugee populations, and communities of color.

Trends: Advisory Group Feedback

In advance of the July 24th meeting, The County provided the Advisory Group with the following list of preliminarily identified Significant Trends to act as the basis for formulating a range of possible futures that the Clean Water Plan will consider:

- Aging Infrastructure
- Population Increase and Land Use
- Integrated Approaches
- Regulatory Requirements
- Ecosystem Health/Pressures
- Climate Change
- Public Support
- Stormwater Quality and Management

At the meeting, Advisory Group members identified refinements and additional trends for the County's consideration; discussed challenges that emerge related to the Significant Trends and the interplay among them; and provided insights on addressing those challenges to make space for healthy debate related to different views of our water quality future.

Trends: Refinements and Additions

Advisory Group members signaled support for the inclusion of the eight trends initially included for consideration in the Clean Water Planning process. Of the trends listed, Advisory Group members signaled a desire to see trends related to natural resources expanded beyond habitats and noted that the existing list may overemphasize infrastructure to the detriment of other important regional trends. In addition to these refinements, Advisory Group members identified the following trends as impactful future conditions for consideration in the process as well:

- Cost of Living
- Displacement
- Job Growth (specifically green jobs)
- Future of Other Utilities (e.g., gas, drinking water, power)
- Ocean Acidification

Addressing Emerging Regional Challenges

Given the significant trends and interplay among them, Advisory Group members identified and discussed some of the challenges that emerge for regional water quality management overall and King County's role specifically. Advisory Group members also provided their insights for engaging with the region in a deliberative conversation to address challenges, produce new insights and possibilities, and make space for healthy debate related to different views of our water quality future. A summary of the discussion is included below.

- Advisory Group members discussed the complex challenge of climate change and its potentially significant impact on other trends. Advisory Group members noted that climate change has the potential to increase population growth as climate refugees resettle in the region and may stress capacity of other utilities such as power. Advisory Group members signaled an interest in the County further exploring interdependencies of trends with climate change to better understand how climate change may introduce additional water quality pressures, such as supply quantity, and influence potential solutions.

- Advisory Group members discussed the challenge that the projected population increase poses to the region's environmental and ecological carrying capacity. Concern was expressed related to the ability of land use technology, and other changes to manage for the impacts.
- Advisory Group members signaled a desire to address challenges and identify solutions across the water cycle and to continue to break down silos across wastewater, drinking water, and stormwater. Advisory Group members expressed a desire to see the organizations with jurisdiction over regional drinking water supply to be engaged in the regional water quality discussion in instances where there are direct relationships between water quality and drinking water source waters and operations.
- Advisory Group members discussed the challenge that King County faces in maintaining public trust and support when significant investment of public funds to decrease discharges may not result in the most impactful water quality benefits. In response, Advisory Group members indicated a desire to see more robust communications efforts to educate the community on how different investments differentially impact water quality and ecosystem health.
- Advisory Group members discussed the complex political landscape that exists in the region, including urban and rural differences. Advisory Group members emphasized that successful collaboration needs to acknowledge and navigate that landscape. Discussions included the recommendation that any action taken on the County's part should look to engage people using language and imagery that will resonate with their community to demonstrate that all communities are welcome and important in the effort.
- During the discussions, Advisory Group members signaled a desire for the County to explore how technology may provide an opportunity to change how water systems are managed and monitored. Advisory Group members also highlighted that given long-term planning cycles of utilities and the uncertainty of technological breakthroughs, technological advancements are oftentimes difficult to plan for and incorporate but expressed a desire to see the County explore potential applications.
- Advisory Group discussions highlighted the potential to coordinate with densification and growth activities to ensure that new construction, industrial, and redeveloped areas are developed broadly and holistically with stormwater management and other water quality interventions incorporated at the beginning of project planning. Advisory Group members recommended that the group further explore a discussion of how growth at transit hubs and locations increasing in density can be managed differently at a policy level to result in better coordination with water quality goals.
- Advisory Group members signaled an interest in exploring how coordinated planning and funding may open the door to greater water quality improvements. Discussions, however, noted that regional cooperation may have implications on the level of authority to act independently at the local level. The balance between regional cooperation and local autonomy will require careful consideration to identify the right path forward.
- Advisory Group members signaled an interest in exploring a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to stormwater management. Advisory Group members noted concern at the current fragmentation of stormwater management jurisdictions, and discussions focused on the need for more regional coordination and collaboration of stormwater management. Advisory Group members signaled that recently issued stormwater permits and allowances provide a basis for enhanced watershed planning enabling local governments to work more closely across jurisdictions.

Attendees

Advisory Group

Name	Title	Organization
Patricia Akiyama	Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties	External Relations Manager
Heather Bartlett	Ecology	Water Quality Program Manager
Josh Brown	Puget Sound Regional Council	Executive Director
Jeff Clarke	MWPAAC - Alderwood Water and Wastewater District	General Manager
Adrian Dominguez	Urban Indian Health Institute	Scientific Director
Dave Gering	Manufacturing Industrial Council (MIC)	Executive Director
Alex Horner-Devine	Substitute for Ben Packard (UW)	Professor, Civil & Environmental Engineering
Jessie Israel	The Nature Conservancy	Puget Sound Director
Jay Manning	Puget Sound Partnership	Board Chair; Vice Board Chair
Mindy Roberts	Washington Environmental Council	Puget Sound Program Director
Anne Udalo	League of Women Voters	Board Member
Leslie Webster	MWPAAC - Seattle Public Utilities	Drainage and Wastewater System Planning Program Manager
Wade Wheeler	Boeing	Environment, Health, and Safety Senior Leader
Ken Workman	Former Council Member	Duwamish Tribe
<i>Advisory Group Members Not Present</i>		
Monty Anderson	Building Trades Board Member	King County Labor Council/Building Trades
Bud Nicola	Affiliate Professor	University of Washington
Aiko Schaefer	Executive Director	Front and Centered

King County Staff

Name	Title	Organization
Christie True	DNRP 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