

# Clean Water Plan Advisory Group

## Meeting #3 Summary

### Background

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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 third meeting of the Clean Water Plan Advisory Group took place on October 9, 2019 at the Impact HUB in Pioneer Square, Seattle. Meeting 3 objectives were to:

- Share King County thinking and receive Advisory Group input on some of the decisions that will shape future investment strategies.
- Hear from the Advisory Group about how the County can evaluate potential water quality investments, including analysis of water quality benefits and considerations of Community and King County Priorities in the evaluation.

In advance of the meeting, Advisory Group members were provided a briefing document that outlined examples of the types of decisions, questions, and considerations that could be part of King County's future investment strategies and included additional details for two of the eleven priorities that will provide a basis for the evaluation of the actions that will be considered. The briefing document also included a set of appendices that provided additional context.

This meeting summary provides non-attributed highlights from the presentations and discussions at the October 9, 2019 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 & Land Acknowledgement

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Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) leadership opened the meeting with a welcome and an acknowledgement that the meeting was held on the traditional land of Duwamish People and expressing gratitude for Coast Salish People, past and present. As a follow-on to the statement of land acknowledgement, an Advisory Group member took a moment to point out that the Masins Building, in

which the meeting was located, is constructed from local, old-growth timbers that hold a deep connection to Duwamish ancestry.

Next, DNRP leadership briefly summarized the rationale for accelerating the planning process to present a plan to King County Council at the end of 2021, rather than the previous schedule of 2022. The plan has been accelerated to be responsive to:

- The King County Executive's charge to be bold and take action to achieve cleaner, restored, protected waters faster.
- The growing need to make tough decisions on water quality, aging infrastructure, and increasing pressures of current and proposed regulatory requirements.

King County is confident the shift in the planning process will not impact the quality of the process or the plan. The values and trends previously identified in scenario planning will be used to evaluate the alternatives that will be examined as part of the plan.

As part of opening comments, DNRP leadership was asked to clarify how the plan would:

- **Fully vet alternatives for consideration:** Leadership noted that while future scenarios will not be evaluated in the abstract as part of a scenario planning process, a sensitivity analysis will be applied across a range of assumptions to ensure that, given the uncertainty of some key trends, the plan does not oversteer into one specific future.
- **Range of alternatives for evaluation:** Leadership noted that a range of alternatives and related actions would be explored. The range would be defined by exploring opportunities for delivering the best overall water quality outcomes for the County's investments. Alternatives outside of current regulatory and other requirements and the associated overall authorizing environment will be included where they produce as good or better water quality than achieved now. In this way, the plan will have the opportunity to examine a full suite of water quality investment alternatives.

## Update on the Planning Process

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The County will aim to complete the Clean Water Plan fully by the end of 2021. To do this, next steps and near term activities will include the development of an existing conditions report. This report will act as a reference document on the background and need for the plan, information on the planning area being considered, and a survey of the existing conditions, such as collection, treatment, and water quality for the area included in the plan.

The County also provided a summary of the outreach activities conducted to date. At the time of this meeting, the County was in the process of developing a Regional Engagement Summary of 2019 Outreach Activities. This document will be shared with the Advisory Group once it is finalized.

## Decisions & Considerations: Advisory Group Feedback

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One of the key objectives of the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting was to share King County thinking and receive Advisory Group input on some of the decisions that will shape future investment strategies. To open this discussion, King County reviewed the following eight preliminary decision areas that have been identified for possible consideration as part of the plan:

- Treatment Plants
- Pollution Source Control/Product Stewardship
- Stormwater and Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)
- Wastewater Conveyance System
- Asset Management, Resiliency, and Redundancy
- Legacy Pollution
- Resource Recovery
- Finance

Prior to the meeting, the County provided additional details, including key questions and considerations, for three of the eight decision areas to provide examples of the types of decisions that will shape King County's future investment strategies. The following is a summary of the feedback Advisory Group members provided under each of the three decision areas selected for focused discussion:

### **Decision: Treatment Plants - What treatment plant investments should be made?**

In addition to the considerations provided by the County in the briefing document, Advisory Group members expressed interest in the County including the following considerations when seeking to understand what treatment plant investments should be made:

- **Capacity and Level of Treatment:** Advisory group members referenced considering different population growth projections and how the capacity of treatment plants are sized. One member suggested that capacity and therefore size of treatment facility is inflated during the design process due to a variety of reasons. Some of the reason are conservative population projections, flow forecasts, and engineering standards that direct for factor of safety in design. The level of treatment achieved including removal of nutrients was also discussed. There was discussion of the science of nutrient impacts on Puget Sound and regulation of nutrients.
- **Distributed/Decentralized Systems:** Given the extended timeframe covered by the plan (40 years), discussion indicated an interest in considering how technology and standard operational practices might evolve to support something other than a strictly centralized system. Suggestions included exploring what the benefits might be of incorporating more nimble and distributed system solutions and seeking to better understand the role smaller or more scalable modular treatment facilities in certain treatment contexts (e.g., nutrient management).
- **Siting:** Advisory Group members encouraged the County to consider the pros and cons, including for example energy use, of siting treatment plants in different geographic areas of the county. Suggestions included exploring how innovative technologies, such as in-pipe hydro, may help offset the cost of siting and constructing new treatment plants.
- **Reclaimed Water:** Given the uncertainty around climate change impacts on water availability in the region, discussion indicated an interested in considering what opportunities exist for incorporating advanced water treatment processes into future treatment plant investments to produce water suitable for reclamation to rehydrate surface waters. Suggestions included exploring the benefits of incorporating advanced treatment into treatment facilities and of building infrastructure in anticipation of water reuse in the future (e.g., purple pipe requirements in Silverdale).
- **Population Growth:** Given the uncertainty that population forecasts can have, both in overall population growth and where that growth may be located within the region, Advisory Group members expressed interest in incorporating a range of population growth forecasts into the planning assumptions as well as the incorporation of the potential variability of growth locations. Advisory Group members understood that significant growth is expected.

### **Decision: Pollution Source Control/Product Stewardship - Are there more efficient or effective methods than wastewater treatment to address pollutants of concern?**

In addition to the considerations provided by the County in the briefing document, Advisory Group members expressed interest in the County including the following considerations when seeking to understand what effective methods should be considered to address pollutants of concern:

- **Partnership:** Given that the prevention of pollution at the source involves a change in behavior or processes from actors outside of King County's system, Advisory Group members expressed an interest in exploring how partnerships can be leveraged to achieve lower levels of water contamination at an earlier stage in the water lifecycle. Suggestions included exploring how the County can build on the growing desire of manufacturers to demonstrate product stewardship to their consumers. The County can make it easier for manufacturers to demonstrate stewardship by identifying and prioritizing the most problematic contaminants (e.g., developing a focused list of 12-15), mapping product origins, and working with manufacturers to eliminate or reduce use of those contaminants. Advisory Group members suggested this approach was aligned with recommendations from other efforts, such as the Toxics and Fish Implementation Strategy. While the Advisory Group signaled a desire to explore partnership options further, past experience (e.g., the continued branding of personal wipes as flushable when they in fact foul pumps and pipes in the collection system) suggests that the County may need to have limited expectations for the extent to which product manufacturers and distributors will cooperate in product stewardship efforts. Advisory Group members shared the perspective that source control efforts of this type should be considered in addition to treatment options, not instead of. Other suggestions included exploring how other sectors, such as solid waste, have approached product stewardship and what strategies might be applicable for inclusion in the Clean Water Plan.

### **Decision: Stormwater and Combined Sewer Overflows - What approach should be taken to address stormwater and combined sewer overflows in King County's System?**

In addition to the considerations provided by the County in the briefing document, Advisory Group members expressed interest in the County including the following considerations when seeking to understand what approach should be taken to address stormwater and combined sewer overflows in King County's system:

- **Cooperative Approach:** Given the 118 billion gallons of untreated stormwater estimated to enter wetlands, streams, lakes, rivers, and Puget Sound annually outside of WTD collection and direct DNRP control, the Advisory Group signaled an interest in a combined stormwater management framework across the jurisdictions in the region. Advisory Group members also acknowledged that the currently siloed management approach is in large part the result of a historically siloed regulatory framework and suggested that a reassessment and coordination at the regulatory level would open up opportunities for coordination of efforts at the county level. Suggestions included not only working across stormwater jurisdictions, but also a recommendation to coordinate with long term land use planning to reduce stormwater runoff.
- **Creative Solutions:** Advisory Group members expressed interest in the incorporation of out of the box, creative solutions to stormwater management. Suggestions included a review of other creative domestic efforts to reduce stormwater, such as the strategic use of raingardens.

- **Framing the Issue:** Given stormwater's critical role in replenishing aquifers, Advisory Group members expressed interest in shifting from a management framework where stormwater is treated as a waste to a management framework where stormwater is treated as a resource.

## Community & King County Priorities

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At the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, the County asked the Advisory Group to provide feedback on how the County can systematically evaluate potential water quality investments for their ability to advance two of the eleven Clean Water Plan priorities. The following is a summary of the discussions of these two priorities at the Advisory Group meeting.

### Prioritize the best water quality outcomes for our investments

To prioritize investment strategies that result in the best water quality outcomes, Advisory Group members discussed the following:

- **Vision:** Advisory Group members expressed a desire for the County to develop a vision for the future water quality of the region. This vision would provide a better understanding of what the County seeks to achieve for the region and would allow individuals and organizations to buy into and seek to support that vision. Once that vision is established, Advisory Group members noted that an effective plan can then clearly demonstrate how King County's efforts will help achieve that overall vision and how progress will be measured. A strong vision will also help to align various interests and constituencies across the region to help them understand the role they can play in the plan's success.
- **Universal Indicator/Metric:** During discussions, some Advisory Group members indicated an interest in the development of one metric or indicator that, when indexed, could indicate change in overall water quality and act as the basis for identifying the investments that produce the best water quality returns. A universal metric has the potential to reduce complexity and create a clear roadmap for improvement to educate and motivate the community and important private actors. Discussion also recognized that, given the complex nature of water quality (e.g., different pollutants, different locations, different impacts), the derivation of a single or limited number of indicators would be quite challenging.
  - Example 1: This effort could be similar to the decision to measure climate change with CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent and converting other contributors, such as methane, to that metric.
  - Example 2: In the solid waste sector, waste reduction is measured by the reduction in tonnage. For wastewater, King County could measure reduction in the total amount of contamination that comes to the system to measure divergence efforts.
- **Multi-Objective Analysis:** Some Advisory Group members expressed concern at the use of a universal metric or indicator and highlighted the challenges that may arise in accurately measuring water quality improvements with one indicator or metric given the variety of endpoints that could be measured (e.g., temperature, pollutant load) and the complexity and potential interaction of those endpoints. Given the wide variety of elements that are needed to achieve clean waters and healthy habitats, Advisory Group discussions indicated an interest in the use of multi-objective analysis to provide a more accurate sense of the range of benefits that can result from different investment strategies.
- **High Priority Contaminants:** Advisory Group members expressed interest in the development of a list of high priority contaminants to guide efforts to prioritize Clean Water Plan investment strategies to reduce the occurrence of those contaminants in our rivers, lakes, and Puget Sound.

- **Regulatory Framework:** Given the advancement of technology, science, and understanding of water quality and the evolving set of stressors (e.g., nutrients, contaminants, climate change) that impact water quality today vs in the past, Advisory Group discussions indicated an interest in a review of the current regulatory framework with the goal of providing the direction needed to result in meaningful water quality improvement within the context of limited resources. Members also indicated that regulatory requirements must be integral to the discussion and not optional.
- **Affordability:** Discussions indicated that wastewater service rates in our region are currently some of the highest in the country. This was seen as placing pressure on the Clean Water Plan to examine carefully the costs and benefits of proposed Clean Water Plan investments and understand where opportunities exist within and outside of the current regulatory and policy context to deliver the best water quality for the community's investments.

### Ensure benefits and impacts are distributed and experienced equitably

Advisory Group members discussed methods (e.g., indicators, data collection, and engagement) to measure the potential of each investment strategy to ensure benefits and impacts are distributed and experienced equitably:

- **Mapping Equity Indicators:** Advisory Group members overall signaled support for developing a systematic means for evaluating the distributional equity of future Clean Water Plan investments. In this context, members expressed interest in seeing key indicators, such as CSO discharges, specific plan investments, and health disparities, mapped over the King County service area to better understand how different communities are experiencing disparities in outcome equity. Such a “heat map” could form the basis for evaluating the anticipated impacts of alternative investments. The complexity of producing such a map was mentioned. For example, it was noted that looking at the region in aggregate, disparities are not seen. However, when looking at the census tract, disparities are clearly seen.
- **Anti-Displacement:** Advisory Group members cautioned that when improvements within underserved communities are done without coordination for other support services, those communities may be displaced by the improvements (e.g., green infrastructure may increase livability/aesthetics of community resulting in gentrification and higher rent/home values). The risk of displacement from investment strategies should be understood and mitigated throughout the planning and implementation process of the Clean Water Plan (e.g., through partnerships with housing initiatives).
- **Family Wage Jobs:** Advisory Group members expressed interest in exploring the ability of Clean Water Plan investments to increase the availability of family wage jobs within the communities that are identified for investment or improvement to grow community and professional development.
- **Rate Affordability:** Some Advisory Group members expressed interest in the exploration of income based rates, rather than the current structure with bill relief used by many public services, such as power and water, to address affordability.
- **New and Existing Ratepayers:** Advisory Group discussions indicated that one aspect of distributional equity to consider as part of the planning process is who among rate payers should shoulder the burden of funding collection and treatment system upgrades. In particular, Advisory Group members noted that current rate payers have funded the current system's infrastructure investments raising questions about their role in and burden for future investments.
- **Meaningful Engagement:** Advisory Group members expressed a desire for the County to educate the community on the specific water quality challenges faced by the region, given that many people



understand the broad outline of the problems but not specifics. This education will help prepare people to understand solutions and tradeoffs for proposed paths forward. Advisory Group members encouraged the County to create accessible metrics the public can understand and track to understand progress towards Clean Water Plan goals and hold the County and elected officials accountable. For events, Advisory Group members recommended the following when engaging with the community:

- Inclusive Engagement Timing (e.g., hosting events outside of normal work hours)
- Provide Daycare
- Acknowledge/Address Language Barriers

To ensure this topic is explored fully, the County asked Advisory Group members to indicate if they are available to lend their expertise to have further conversations about how to achieve equitable outcomes in the Clean Water Plan. The County and Advisory Group members are in conversations about advancing discussions of equity for the Clean Water Plan with their networks.

## Attendees

### Advisory Group

NAME	Title	Organization	Attendance 10/09
Monty Anderson	Building Trades Board Member	King County Labor Council/Building Trades	Absent
Heather Bartlett	Water Quality Program Manager	Department of Ecology	Absent – Sent Sub
Josh Brown	Executive Director	Puget Sound Regional Council	Present
Caia Caldwell	External Relations Manager	Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties	Present
Jeff Clarke	General Manager	MWPAAC - Alderwood Water and Wastewater District	Present
Adrian Dominguez	Scientific Director	Urban Indian Health Institute	Absent
Dave Gering	Executive Director	Manufacturing Industrial Council	Absent
Jessie Israel	Puget Sound Director	The Nature Conservancy	Present
Andrew Lee	Substitute – Leslie Webster	MWPAAC - Seattle Public Utilities	Present
Jay Manning	Board Chair; Vice Board Chair	Puget Sound Partnership	Present
Rachel McCrea	Substitute – Heather Bartlett	Department of Ecology	Present
David Mendoza	Legislative and Government Affairs Director	Front and Centered	Present
Bud Nicola	Affiliate Professor	University of Washington	Present
Ben Packard	Executive Director	Earthlab, University of Washington	Present
Mindy Roberts	Puget Sound Program Director	Washington Environmental Council	Present
Anne Udalo	Board Member	League of Women Voters	Present
Leslie Webster	Drainage and Wastewater System Planning Program Manager	MWPAAC – Seattle Public Utilities	Absent – Sent Sub
Wade Wheeler	Environment, Health, and Safety Senior Leader	Boeing	Present
Ken Workman	Former Council Member	Duwamish Tribe	Present

### King County and Clean Water Plan Staff

NAME	TITLE
Christie True	DNRP Director
Josh Baldi	Water and Land Resources Division Director
Sonia-Lynn Abenojar	Clean Water Plan Regional Engagement Project Manager
Steve Tolzman	Clean Water Plan Program Manager and Planning Project Manager
Tiffany Knapp	Clean Water Plan Planning Project Manager and Alternate Program Manager
Abby Hook	Environmental Affairs Officer



<b>Joe Hovenkotter</b>	<b>Tribal Government Relations Officer</b>
<b>Inge Wiersema</b>	<b>Carollo Engineers – Clean Water Plan Consultant</b>
<b>Ian McKelvey</b>	<b>Brown and Caldwell – Clean Water Plan Consultant</b>

## **Facilitators – Ross Strategic**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TITLE</b>
<b>Rob Greenwood</b>	<b>Principal</b>
<b>Sarah Shadid</b>	<b>Associate</b>