



Environmental Priorities

Climate change is one of the paramount environmental and economic challenges for our generation. King County has an important role in the protection and restoration of our natural environment, in the development of a sustainable and equitable economy, and in ensuring the health and well-being of its residents. The waters of Puget Sound and the surrounding natural environment are affected every day by pollution and toxics from our cars and homes, industry, and land development. As the Puget Sound region experiences rapid population growth and a changing climate, Executive Dow Constantine proposes to prioritize investments in actions that will preserve and restore our natural environment, help residents and businesses adapt, and lead the way to an equitable clean energy economy.

OVERVIEW

King County's environmental priorities include:

- Achieving healthy water quality and habitat.
- Preserving, creating, and maintaining equitable green spaces and resilient natural systems.
- Creating a clean energy economy with career pathways for historically oppressed communities and transitioning our built environment for a climate-friendly future.
- Accelerating the transformation of waste management toward zero waste of resources.

These priorities closely tie to the Clean Water, Healthy Habitat (CWHH) initiative, the Land Conservation Initiative (LCI), the Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP), and the County's Equity and Social Justice work.

PROPOSED NEW INVESTMENTS & ANTICIPATED IMPACT

Although King County's budget has changed to reflect new COVID-19 financial realities, many new environmental investments are proposed for the upcoming biennium. This document summarizes major new investments, but this list is not exhaustive, and it does not include the many *existing* investments that are already supporting the environment via the base budgets of the Department of Natural Resources & Parks (DNRP), Public Health – Seattle & King County (PHSKC), Metro Transit, and Department of Local Services (DLS).

Achieve Healthy Water Quality and Habitat

- **Transforming how we do the work:** The Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) proposes investing \$2.6 million to improve outcome-based decision-making, equitable investments, and innovation through:
 - Better and more integrated data on water quality, habitat restoration projects, stream flows and temperatures, and water quality disparities based on race and/or place.
 - Enhanced tools to ensure that water quality investments have the highest return.
 - New methodologies to evaluate and mitigate how climate change will affect stormwater management.
 - An improved ability to identify and tackle multi-benefit and multi-objective projects in areas such as floodplains, which have competing interests.



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- **Resilient coastlines:** WLRD will also invest \$1.7 million in Vashon restoration projects, including Maury Island armoring removal and the Aquatic Reserve on the West Dock and Big Beach.
- **Controlled and clean stormwater:** The Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) proposes \$88.4 million in combined sewer overflow (CSO) and green stormwater infrastructure. These investments will continue WTD's path toward compliance with the consent decree and will identify new approaches to maintaining and improving water quality. In addition, WLRD is investing \$1 million in its Stormwater Water Quality Program to support basin retrofit projects.
- **Reduced toxics and pathogens:**
 - Invest \$314,000 to reduce fecal water pollution through interagency collaboration and improved response to on-site sewage and septic system failures.
 - Fund the removal of creosote-treated timber from Harbor Island, which will reduce pollution at the mouth of the Duwamish River.
 - Build for the WTD system's future needs through roughly \$150 million in plant improvements, including setting the stage for future nutrient removal investments at Brightwater.
 - Reduce arsenic and other metals that are discharged in landfill leachate to levels below the regulatory limits through \$19 million in investments.
- **Healthier forests and more greenspaces:** The Parks Division and WLRD are adding a forest steward position to accelerate the preparation of forest stewardship plans, increase the pace of County-owned land restoration, and help implement the County's forest carbon projects.
- **Functioning floodplains:**
 - Move forward with the \$2.8 million implementation of the Fall City restoration project.
 - Dedicate \$3 million to address flooding and drainage issues associated with streams, lakes, and wetlands, as well as drainage and habitat improvement near farmlands.
- **Better fish habitat:**
 - The 2021-2022 budget includes \$6.4 million in new fish passage investments from WLRD, Roads, and Parks to provide 8.5 new habitat miles by the end of the biennium. In addition, WTD will add a fish passable culvert as part of a larger project.
 - To date, King County projects have primarily been funded through stormwater fees, which are inadequate for the County's ambitious habitat goals. To help make the most of scarce resources, the County is looking to partner with co-managers (tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) to prioritize projects that generate the greatest benefit for fish, including redirecting funds from high-cost, low-value projects to high-priority blockages. A new position is proposed to coordinate and track this work.

Preserve, Create and Maintain Green Spaces and Resilient Natural Systems

- **Regional trail system investments:** Approximately \$87 million in investments are planned for Eastrail, East Lake Sammamish Trail, the Foothills Regional Trail, and others. Parks plans to complete four trail connections by 2022, providing residents with transportation alternatives that will help reduce emissions and strengthen regional mobility.
- **Land conservation:** The 2021-2022 Conservation Futures Tax (CFT) allocation of at least \$72 million will, in part, leverage debt financing to support the Land Conservation Initiative. Additionally, up to \$20 million of the Parks Levy may be dedicated to County open space projects in 2021. In the applications for 2021 CFT funding, up to 97 acres in cities and up to 2,391 acres in unincorporated King County are proposed.



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- Increase opportunity to preserve open space in underserved neighborhoods by waiving \$10.3 million in match requirement for 49 acres in open space opportunity areas.
- Update the County's Open Space Plan by 2022.

Create a Clean Energy Economy and Transition Our Physical Environment for a Climate-Friendly Future

- **Reduce emissions and waste in our built environment:**
 - Incorporate green building standards and achieve LEED Platinum, LEED Gold, and Living Building Challenge (LBC) certifications in projects across the County. In fact, 242 capital projects in this budget are pursuing green building standards.
 - Fund energy investments in the Parks Aquatic Center and Parks Central Maintenance Facility, preliminary design for an LBC-certified education space at WTD's South Plant, and LED lighting upgrades at the airport.
 - Add a Green Building Permitting position in the Department of Local Services to provide ongoing support to improve building efficiency, reduce water use, and reduce construction waste, with a focus on unincorporated King County. The tools developed by this specialist could serve as models for jurisdictions across the region.
 - Invest the Climate Cost Share budget, which is funded by agencies that create carbon emissions, to support the development of partnerships and programs to advance countywide energy efficiency and reduced use of fossil fuels in the built environment, which are crucial to reaching countywide goals.
 - Prioritize energy efficiency improvements to Metro facilities, including HVAC, wash system, and equipment replacements. Further, Metro will be pursuing LEED/LBC Certification of the South Annex Base project, ENVISION Certification of new RapidRide lines, integration of updated design guidelines to maximize energy efficiency and on-site solar, and limitations on new natural gas infrastructure.
- **Reduce emissions in transportation:**
 - Make short-term investments that make progress toward Metro's long-term goal of a Zero Emissions Fleet by 2040.
 - Increase the consumption of alternative fuels in on-airport vehicles at the King County International Airport.
 - Estimate the cost of installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the Goat Hill and King Street Center parking garages. A mid-biennium supplemental could fund the infrastructure, if it is found to be financially feasible. There is also a proposal to make the Fleet truck inventory more fuel efficient.
- **Expand carbon sequestration:** WLRD is planning \$1 million for tree planting to offset emissions and make progress toward carbon neutrality goals and the proposed 3 Million Trees "Plant, Protect, Prepare" 2020 SCAP commitment.
- **Advance Green Jobs:** In response to Ordinance 19041 and a community priority in the 2020 SCAP, the Climate Leadership Team proposes a position to develop and implement a new Green Jobs Strategy. The strategy will identify opportunities for development of green jobs and remove barriers to accessing the green economy, with an emphasis on communities that have been historically excluded from pathways to living wage jobs. The Climate Equity Community Task Force has made recommendations to inform the strategy and supports this proposal.



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Accelerate transformation of waste management toward zero waste of resources

- **Internally**
 - Dedicate \$.01 per square foot of Facilities Management Division (FMD) rate to implement waste management best practices. Once the best practices are developed, FMD's internal carbon fee funding may be used in addition to the operating budget to implement new programs.
 - Education and outreach materials will be provided to County staff by Solid Waste once a program is developed.
- **Countywide**
 - Re-invest \$2 million from landfill gas sales to help reach Solid Waste's 2025 goal of carbon neutrality. SWD also plans to use \$7 million to begin implementing a Zero Waste of Resources Plan with partner jurisdictions and stakeholders to help the region meet its goal of zero waste of resources by 2030.
 - Invest \$3.5 million in a pilot project at the South Treatment Plant to convert biosolids from the treatment process into compost that could be sold publicly. At full operations, the pilot could redirect up to 500-750 wet tons of biosolids per year.