

January 29, 2016

The Honorable Joe McDermott
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember McDermott:

This letter transmits a motion and report that responds to the 2015/2016 Biennial Budget Ordinance, Ordinance 17941, Section 55, Proviso P1, which restricts expenditure or encumbrance of fifty thousand dollars until the Solid Waste Division (division) of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks transmits a report on the plan to stabilize closed landfills and a motion that accepts the report by January 31, 2016.

While the regulations specify a post-closure period for each landfill, Public Health-Seattle & King County (Public Health) and the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) will ultimately make the decision on ending post-closure activities based on the demonstration that the landfill is stable. The division is working closely with Ecology to clarify and determine the path and timeline for closure, but the decision ultimately will lie with Ecology. A landfill will be deemed stable when Ecology determines that little or no settlement, gas production, or leachate generation is detected. The division is aware of only one landfill in the state, the Horsethief Landfill located in eastern Washington, which has submitted a report to Ecology demonstrating that the landfill is stable. Ecology, however, still has not determined if the findings are adequate to cease post-closure activities. Discussions are becoming more productive between the division and Ecology as Ecology works to define when stability has occurred and a landfill is deemed to no longer be a potential hazard to public health and environmental protections. This is an ongoing process as the science continues to evolve.

The division is responsible for maintaining and monitoring seven closed landfills that were constructed under different standards than those that guide landfill development today. Depending on the year the landfill closed, a minimum maintenance and monitoring post-closure period of five to 30 years is specified in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), but the timeline is not definite in state law. Although most of the closed landfills have reached the end of the required minimum post-closure period, regulations and the understanding of closure requirements have changed, requiring ongoing maintenance and

monitoring. Data is being collected to develop the rate proposal for the next biennial budget and the division is analyzing how to best fund continued maintenance and monitoring costs through that process.

The division has studies underway at the Vashon, Cedar Falls, Hobart, and Enumclaw landfills to determine what additional actions are needed for these landfills to reach a stable state. When a stable state has been reached, post-closure activities at these landfills may be reduced or terminated. Decisions on these locations by Ecology will allow the division to better create a timeline and plan for the remainder of the closed landfills.

The division's plans to stabilize the seven closed landfills embody the King County Strategic Plan goal of safeguarding and enhancing King County's natural resources and environment. In addition, work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to sequester carbon by planting trees as landfill cover, supports the goals of the Strategic Climate Action Plan.

It is estimated that this report required about 40 staff hours to produce, costing approximately \$3,000.

Thank you for your continued support of the Solid Waste Division's work to provide environmentally-responsible and efficient solid waste service to the residents and businesses of King County.

If you have any questions, please contact Pat D. McLaughlin, Division Director of the Solid Waste Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-477-4501.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers
 ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff
 Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council
Carrie S. Cihak, Chief of Policy Development, King County Executive Office
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget
Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)
Pat D. McLaughlin, Division Director, Solid Waste Division, DNRP