



# KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

## Signature Report

### Motion 15663

**Proposed No.** 2019-0291.1

**Sponsors** Lambert

1                   A MOTION acknowledging receipt of a sheriff's office  
2                   plan to increase staffing for the sheriff's marine unit during  
3                   the peak recreational months of June, July and August in  
4                   order to reduce safety issues by increasing the number and  
5                   frequency of river patrols, in compliance with the 2019-  
6                   2020 Biennial Budget Ordinance, Ordinance 18835,  
7                   Section 21, Proviso P5.

8                   WHEREAS, the 2019-2020 Biennial Budget Ordinance, Ordinance 18835,  
9                   Section 21, Proviso P5, requires the sheriff's office to transmit a plan for increased  
10                  staffing for the sheriff's marine unit during the peak recreation months of June, July and  
11                  August in order to reduce safety issues by increasing the number and frequency of river  
12                  patrols and an accompanying motion acknowledging receipt of this plan, and

13                  WHEREAS, the attached plan describes enforcement issues typical of the peak  
14                  summer months of June, July and August on or near the various rivers throughout the  
15                  unincorporated areas of King County, and

16                  WHEREAS, the plan describes the methods and current capacity of the sheriff's  
17                  office to provide patrols and enforcement action on or near the rivers of the  
18                  unincorporated areas of King County;

19                  NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

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20           The plan to increase sheriff's marine unit staffing during the peak recreation  
21 months of June, July and August in order to reduce safety issues by increasing the  
22 number and frequency of river patrols in compliance with the 2019-2020 Biennial Budget

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23 Ordinance, Ordinance 18835, Section 21, Proviso P5, which is Attachment A to this  
24 motion, is hereby acknowledged.  
25

Motion 15663 was introduced on 2/4/2020 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 8/18/2020, by the following vote:

Yes: 9 - Ms. Balducci, Mr. Dembowski, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Kohl-Welles, Ms. Lambert, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Upthegrove, Mr. von Reichbauer and Mr. Zahilay

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

DocuSigned by:  
*Claudia Balducci*  
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Claudia Balducci, Chair

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:  
*Melani Pedroza*  
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Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

**Attachments:** A. Sheriff's Marine Unit Staffing Plan During Peak Months

June 27, 2019

The Honorable Rod Dembowski  
Chair, King County Council  
Room 1200  
King County Courthouse

Re: Ordinance 18835, Section 21, Proviso 5

Dear Councilmember Dembowski:

The following River Safety plan is submitted in accordance with 2019-2020 Biennial Budget, Section 21, Proviso 5 and Ordinance No. 18835. This report responds to and addresses the direction from King County Council as adopted by ordinance:

*Of this appropriation, \$100,000 shall not be expended or encumbered until the sheriff transmits a plan to increase staffing for the sheriff marine unit during the peak recreation months of June, July and August in order to reduce safety issues by increasing the number and frequency of river patrols.*

The Sheriff's Office has evaluated all of the existing resources within our department to create a plan that emphasizes river safety, shoreline enforcement and education programs. This plan addresses the known problem areas and issues impacting the quality of life for those who reside near the rivers, and for those who travel to these rivers to enjoy a safe day of recreation. Our plan also details how additional funding can be used to enhance river safety during peak usage times from June to August.

### **Plan Considerations**

The most challenging aspect to expanding law enforcement on rivers is identifying available deputies who can be assigned to this body of work within our existing budget. Due in part to cumulative budget cuts and seasonal demand, most of our deputies are already fully utilized in their current assignments and we have a very limited number of deputies we can re-direct for this purpose. Furthermore, each river presents a unique enforcement challenge to the Sheriff's Office Marine Unit and patrol force based on the access points, distance from the precinct, and specialized equipment needed for safety. For deputies not familiar with working in this environment, specific river safety training will be required to ensure officer and public safety.

Despite these challenges, we are committed to leveraging the existing Marine Unit and patrol resources to increase our presence at locations where we receive the most resident complaints and or present the greatest amount of safety concerns. The clearest way to show the additional river safety work we can do is by breaking it into the groups that will be providing enhanced services; the Marine Unit and Patrol Operations. We are also attaching a summary of resources to this report as Attachment 1.

### **Marine Unit**

Currently, our Marine Unit is staffed with four full-time deputies to actively patrol Lake Sammamish and Lake Washington, and in rare cases, respond to the Puget Sound for calls for assistance as a member of the Port Security regional assets. We also have six ancillary deputies with marine training and equipment that have other full-time assignments, but who can be called in on overtime.

In terms of equipment, the Marine Unit has several moored vessels and several trailerable smaller vessels, but none of them are appropriate for river patrols in low water conditions. Our only vessel (21 Ft. Jet Boat) capable of patrolling river waters, has limited usage when the water levels drop during the summer months. At that point, our operational capacity is reduced to our swift water rafts which can be drifted down the river one-way. This is not an ideal use of these crafts as they should also be available for swift water rescues and are not normally deployed as river patrol resources.

The Marine Unit also has marine patrol contracts with nine cities on two lakes and these obligations reduce the available time for enforcement along the rivers. Some of these obligations include planned city-sponsored events on the water where life-safety considerations make it a priority for us to maintain a presence. Without adding full-time staff to the Marine Unit, it will be very difficult to free up time from the current unit to expand river patrols; however, the unit will respond to river safety issues when emergent circumstances occur.

If the Sheriff's Office receives additional FTEs for the Marine Unit, we would be able to conduct emphasis patrols in the areas with the most reported complaints and expand river safety education at popular entry and exit points along the rivers. Enforcement on the waterways would still depend on water levels or the suitability of the vessel to operate on each particular river. From a safety viewpoint, Marine Unit deputies are more appropriately trained to work along the rivers than patrol. Educating the public regarding the dangers of cold and/or swift water is an important component of water safety that can save lives and reduce the risk for our residents. Additional overtime for the Marine Unit would allow the unit to do occasional extra patrols during peak usage times along the rivers.

### **Unincorporated Patrol**

Patrol staffing is currently available on a limited basis to conduct river area enforcement in Precinct 2 (North) and Precinct 3 (Southeast) Both precincts are large low-population density with significant forested areas and a number of watersheds. Precinct 2 covers 747 square miles, while Precinct 3 encompasses 729 square miles. The total FTEs budgeted is 42 in Precinct 2, and 52 in Precinct 3, but at any point in time the actual staffing is 10-25 FTEs lower due to vacancies, workplace injuries, and administrative leave. Our minimums per shift are typically 6 deputies in Precinct 2 and 8 deputies in Precinct 3.

Based on the resources available to our precinct commands, we have determined that we can staff our river shorelines for the potential 42 weekend days and holidays during (June, July and August). Specifically, between June 1<sup>st</sup> and September 3<sup>rd</sup> (Labor Day), we can provide 1 hour of on-duty,

directed patrol along the rivers in Precinct 2 for both dayshift and swing shift, on Friday – Sunday and the holiday weekends of July 4<sup>th</sup> and Labor Day. The directed patrols will be focused on prevention, education and enforcement. Additionally, Precinct 2 and 3 Commanders will coordinate one, extra-duty emphasis patrol along the rivers, per month, for June, July and August. The emphasis operations will utilize uniformed and plain clothes employees to investigate violations of the law and issues that diminish public safety.

Some of the key river areas identified for emphasis include the Flaming Geyser State Park on the Green River, and the Cedar River along Maple Valley Hwy West in southeast King County. In north King County, it is the Snoqualmie River along SE Fish Hatchery Rd.

We are committed to making this a priority for patrol deputies during the boating season during times they are not responding to calls for service. There is a risk concern related to water safety for patrol deputies that do intermittent enforcement that has not been fully assessed. We will update our training for deputies tasked with this responsibility to ensure their personal, as well as the public's, safety.

If additional overtime funding is provided, we will develop a revised emphasis plan that will expand the river emphasis patrols to a level commensurate with the funding.

If you have further questions please do not hesitate to contact my office at 206-263-2555.

Sincerely,

Mitzi G Johanknecht  
SHERIFF

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers  
ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff  
Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

## Attachment 1

## Resource information on Marine and Patrol Staffing

**Current Marine Rescue and Dive Unit staffing**

- (4) Full-time deputies
- (1) Full-time sergeant
- (6) Ancillary duty deputies may be available by call-out.

**Workload for the Marine Unit**

Our Marine Rescue and Dive Unit conducts regular patrols on Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish with service contracts to Beaux Arts Township, Cities of Kirkland, Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, Bellevue, Medina, Hunts Point, Sammamish and Issaquah.

Precinct	Two - North	Three - Southeast
<b>Coverage Area Square Miles</b>	943	729
<b>Key Watershed Locations</b>	Snoqualmie River, 37200 block of - SE Fish Hatchery Road	Green River, Flaming Geyser State Park (Whitney Bridge, highway 18 overpass)  Cedar River, Along Maple Valley highway, west to Renton city limits
<b>Deputies Budgeted</b>	42	52
<b>Patrol Shift Minimums 24-7, 365</b>	8	6
<b>Vacancies*</b>	5	2
<b>Non Deployable Workforce*</b>	12	8

\*Staffing data as of April 2019