



King County

Metropolitan King County Council Regional Water Quality Committee

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item:	8	Name:	Mike Reed
Proposed No.:	2019-B0168	Date:	November 6, 2019

SUBJECT

Committee Workshop on the Wastewater Treatment Division Clean Water Plan project.

SUMMARY

The Regional Water Quality Committee has been briefed several times on the progress of the Clean Water Plan long-term planning effort. The Committee was invited to participate in a series of workshop events, to fully engage members on issues and decision-points emerging from the planning effort. The first of these workshops was at the June 2019 RWQC meeting. Increasing urgency in the system operating environment, related to potential regulatory action at the state level and similar developments, has led the Wastewater Treatment Division to accelerate the schedule of the planning process, and to re-engage RWQC on status and direction. This committee meeting will serve as a second workshop on the Clean Water Plan.

BACKGROUND

The business of the Wastewater Treatment Division is focused on the identification, development, construction and operation of physical facilities intended to collect and process the region's wastewater. The capital focus of the agency in recent years has included the Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Plan—which defines how it will develop and construct 14 CSO controls through nine control projects, before 2030. The agency, additionally, has been working to move forward on its Conveyance System Improvement project addressing anticipated capacity demand and system upgrade needs. Finally, the maintenance and upgrade of treatment facilities also represents an additional major project focus of the system.

These ongoing capital projects are complicated by a number of current and potential developments, including the following:

- Substantial increase in regional population, resulting in increasing solids loading to the system;

- Aging infrastructure, and the need for ongoing asset management;
- Current and potential future regulatory requirements, notably including pending nutrients management requirements
- Management of stormwater and wastewater in a single system;
- The need for system resiliency and redundancy, highlighted by the recent West Point system failure.

Wastewater Treatment Division leadership has noted that the possible cumulative fiscal impact of these challenges could represent significant pressure on regional wastewater rates. Additionally, in conversation with the Committee, Division leadership has noted the importance of aligning expenditures to assure “the right investments at the right time” to achieve the greatest water quality improvement outcomes.

As the planning process has moved forward, a number of developments have emerged to emphasize the urgency of moving forward with the planning process and to position the region to appropriately respond to these developments. Most notably, the Washington Department of Ecology has opened the comment period for a proposed “general permit” for nutrient discharges, signaling that municipal wastewater systems statewide may soon be faced with an additional, potentially complex and expensive discharge permitting requirement. Other ongoing pressures include growth-driven system capacity issues, and the 2030 deadline for completing the Consent-Decree-driven Combined Sewer Overflow projects.

The Executive is recommending an acceleration of the planning effort, with a draft Clean Water Plan targeted for late 2021. The near-term focus is on completing an “existing conditions” report, describing the current state of primary parameters that characterize the regional wastewater system; this would be used as a base to identify possible actions or packages of actions.

Today’s briefing will summarize key themes heard in outreach efforts, will discuss the accelerated project schedule, and will outline emerging decision points.

ANALYSIS

This workshop will provide an opportunity for active engagement by the Committee in development of this Clean Water Plan. As the regional policy voice for water quality and wastewater issues, Regional Water Quality Committee involvement in this planning effort is important in helping to set direction, identify key issues, and highlight priorities for the project. The Committee will want to assure that concerns and perspectives raised through the workshop are incorporated in a meaningful way in the direction of the planning effort.

INVITED:

Sonia-Lynn Abenojar, Regional Engagement Project Manager, Wastewater Treatment Division

Steve Tolzman, Program Manager, Wastewater Treatment Division

Tiffany Knapp, Planning Project Manager, Wastewater Treatment Division

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Clean Water Plan Work Session Agenda
2. Clean Water Plan Work Session Briefing Document