

King County Clean Water Plan

Meeting Summary

Submitted by Jeff Clarke and Leslie Webster

Meeting #2: July 24, 2019

Christie True started the meeting by informing the group about the spill of untreated wastewater into Puget Sound on July 19 due to a power failure at the West Point treatment plant. The basin was hit by an unusual amount of rain, and saw a sudden spike of flows equivalent to 300 MGD. The power outage at the same time knocked effluent pumps off line, and forced the staff to open the bypass channel to prevent significant damage to the plant. The bypass lasted about 28 minutes. The previous day a separate power failure knocked the disinfection system at the Renton plant off line for almost an hour. Ms. True said that West Point has very limited power backups due to the size of the plant; they rely on dual power feeds, but apparently both feeds went down.

Facilitator Rob Greenwood clarified that the Clean Water Plan will be focusing on wastewater and stormwater, but will not look at drinking water—that is beyond King County’s scope. Jeff Clarke raised a concern that some solutions to wastewater disposal problems, such as injection wells, can impact drinking water sources, so we cannot ignore drinking water in looking for answers.

Mr. Greenwood walked us through a list of “Regional Priorities” developed from various public input opportunities as well as the first Clean Water Plan meeting. These include:

- Protect our waterways
- Support a Healthy Ecosystem
- Further Equity and Social Justice
- Ensure Robust Engagement
- Leverage Integrated Approaches
- Seek the Greatest Water Quality Benefits
- Prevent Pollution at the Source

He also took us through a list of Trends, some of which are challenges, while others may assist in solutions:

- Aging infrastructure
- Population Increase
- Integrated Approaches
- Increased Regulatory Requirements

- Concern over Ecosystem Health
- Climate Change
- Public Support for Environmental Protection
- Stormwater Management Challenges and Opportunities

The group then discussed our reactions and thoughts about the draft priorities and trends in response to these questions:

- What are the gaps or needed refinements to the community priorities and significant trends presented here?
- Given the significant trends and interplay among them, what challenges do you see emerging for regional water quality management overall and King County's role specifically?

Some of the thoughts included:

- Protect what we have before reaching into new areas.
- Seek a comprehensive view that gives the greatest benefits for the public investment.
- Affordability is an issue on its own.
- A positive factor is that "Clean Water" polls well across all public groups.
- Leaving Drinking Water out is problematic. Look to the One Water approach.
- Solutions need to be multi-jurisdictional. We can't let political boundaries block good answers.
- High tech might bring us answers, however there are no guarantees that it will.
- We seem to be looking at the need to spend significant funds while ceding local control to regional bodies. Both of those are unpopular.
- Public efforts alone will be insufficient—private involvement and engagement are necessary.
- Street runoff is a significant problem.
- Continuing to build out transit facilities and focusing growth nearby will help reduce impacts on the ecosystem.
- We have seen seemingly intractable problems be solved with public buy-in. Commencement Bay looked impossible, but major strides have been made there.
- Protect the Best/Restore the Rest.

The next meeting is October 9. Group Members should consider the following: What are possible Game Changers?