

# King County Clean Water Plan

## Meeting Summary

Submitted by Jeff Clarke

Meeting #3: October 9, 2019

Christie True opened with a welcome, appreciating the group's attendance and efforts, and stated that the project is doing a major pivot. A decision was made to accelerate the process.

She said that King County leadership (apparently from the Executive) has expressed urgency to make major decisions more quickly, and get moving on making a positive impact on Puget Sound. They want WTD to be bold, to take action to get clean water sooner rather than later. The County is in the final stages of enacting a Climate Action Plan, and is developing strategies for its stormwater plan. So they want the process to go a year faster than originally projected.

Ms. True noted the current concerns over nutrients, and the likely need to modify existing facilities to meet new nutrient standards. King County also has a Consent Decree deadline of 2030, but she did not specify what items in that Decree are at risk. For these reasons (to move faster) they dropped the scenario planning idea.

Tiffany Knapp said that WTD will spend 2020 Developing proposed programs, plans, and policies, and then come out with a preferred alternative in 2021. Meanwhile, an EIS will be developed over 2020-21, and there will be an ongoing public outreach process.

A question was raised regarding how we are to address decisions and options given the tight time frame, and expressing concern that we not rush into spending significant money on the wrong course in order to make haste. This is a major, very expensive issue—don't rush into making the wrong choice.

Christie True said "We agree, but we need to go faster."

Steve Tolzman gave an overview of three issues:

- > Treatment plants
- > Pollution control/Product Stewardship
- > Stormwater/CSOs

Christie noted that their WTPs were designed to handle projected growth. However, making changes to deal with nutrients will likely eliminate that capacity for handling growth. She said that nitrogen impacts are both localized and generalized, and her comments indicated that it is not clear that reducing impacts in one localized area (e.g. West Point) would help fix the dissolved oxygen problem elsewhere in the Sound. She said there is a question as to whether to focus nutrient efforts on one site, or reduce them at all three.

She also raised the question of source reduction, which led into a considerable discussion about producer responsibility and source control.

The general format of the bulk of the meeting was that the facilitators gave us a couple of questions on one of the topics, and then we broke up into pairs and trios to discuss it for ten minutes before reporting back. Among the questions asked were:

- *What input do you have on the three initial discussion areas?*
- *How can the County evaluate and prioritize the best water quality outcomes?*
- *How can we engage our networks on these issues?*
- *Where do we see large disparities in equity in terms of King County's wastewater?*

Comments made during the discussions included the following:

- There is hope that technological changes over coming decades will offer solutions we don't know about yet. In particular distributed solutions—a larger number of smaller facilities. More nimble solutions.
- We should be looking at reclaimed water in a big way. Can we get to plants that recycle water back to replenish our aquifers rather than dumping it in the Sound?
- Is King County sure of the science of the nutrient issue? Another member assured us that the science is correct, and wastewater plants are indeed a major cause of the nutrient problem.
- There was considerable emphasis on product stewardship, but no answers on how to apply that to nitrogen, much of which comes from human urine.
- It is important to get the public to buy into the changes we need to make.
- Government investments and actions alone will not solve the problem. We need to get the private sector involved.
- How do we balance costs between long-term residents and newcomers?

The next meeting is set for December 16.