



March 27, 2024

# Regional Wastewater Services Plan Update Revised Approach



# Agenda

- Purpose of briefing
- Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) elements
- Need for plan update
- Revised process, vision for clean water
- Key roles and coordination
- Next steps





# Why we do this

A regional system for protecting water quality and public health

- Serve 1.9 million people in 424 sq-mi service area
- Provide high quality and effective treatment to wastewater collected by 34 local sewer agencies
- Recover and beneficially use biosolids, biogas, recycled water and sewer heat

## Wastewater Treatment Division Mission

*We protect public health and the environment by collecting and cleaning wastewater while recovering valuable resources for a healthy and resilient Puget Sound*



# The RWSP: the comprehensive plan for wastewater

## Pre-1961 – Master Plan

- Current RWSP amends original Master Plan
- Major update in 1999 followed by several amendments
- RWSP is a functional plan under the King County Comprehensive Plan

## RWSP policies and regulations adopted and amended by King County Council

- King County Code 28.84 (Water Pollution Abatement)
- KCC 28.86 (Wastewater Treatment)

## Additional components of the RWSP

- Plans for Combined Sewer Overflows, Conveyance System Improvement, Infiltration/Inflow, and others

## RWSP and related documents form a General Sewer Plan

- Ecology approval required

# Wastewater Treatment Policies (KCC 28.86)

- Treatment plant
- Conveyance
- Infiltration/Inflow
- Combined sewer overflow control
- Biosolids
- Water reuse
- Wastewater services
- Water quality protection
- Wastewater planning
- Environmental mitigation
- Public involvement

*28.86.040 A. The RWSP policies, as set forth in this chapter, shall provide direction for the operation and further development of the wastewater system, its capital improvement program and, as necessary, the development of subsequent policies.*

# Reasons to update the plan

- About half-million more people live in King County than in 2000 and an additional three-quarters of a million people are projected to live here by 2050
- Climate change impacts are already happening and are projected to become more pronounced over time (storms, droughts, wildfire and others)
- An aging system, sufficient capacity for growth, and regulations will require significant investments (\$billions)
- Protect water quality and address current and emerging contaminants and pollutants
- Ensure greater equity and address affordability for customers
- An update to the long-range plan will support the extension of local agency sewage disposal contracts, many of which expire in 2036, and continue to strengthen the relationship with local agencies
- Help make the case for state/federal support, and meet the requirements for General Sewer Plan update for approval by Ecology

# Once the effort is complete, we will have...



Updated RWSP policies in King County Code for the regional wastewater system including a vision for clean water



Policies, plans, and documents that meet state requirements for Ecology approval of General Sewer Plan update



# Clean Water Plan process

- Paused to consider feedback and due to regulatory uncertainty for Nutrients and Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Consent Decree (CD)
- During the pause, WTD is/has:
  - Negotiating the CSO CD modification
  - Implemented the initial cycle for the Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit and monitored litigation
  - Improved transparency in the capital planning and sewer rate processes for MWPAAC and RWQC
  - Held productive discussions and developed an approach to updating the RWSP





# Proposed process will:

- Focus on wastewater system issues and policies, informed by context with related water policies, actions and outcomes
- Affirm King County will meet all regulatory obligations
- Result in updates to KCC 28.84 and 28.86, provide policy guidance for 20+ years
  - WTD to also undertake functional plan and capital program updates to ensure investments are consistent with policy guidance
- Be completed in phases with early policy amendments in 2025
- Include a vision for clean water to guide policy work

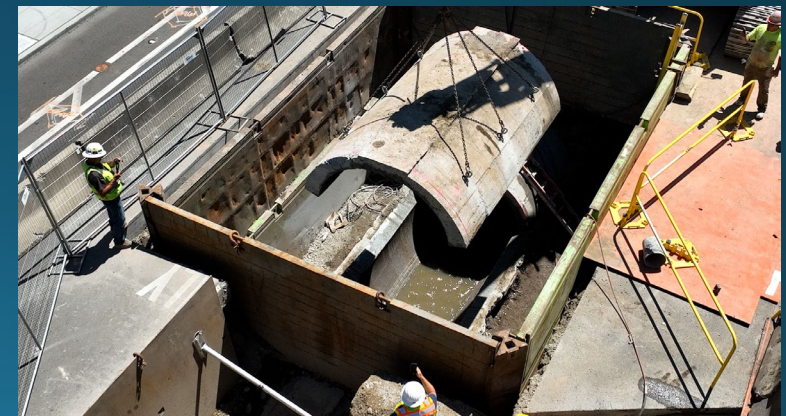
# A vision for clean water would...

- Describe the wastewater system we want in 2075
  - *Imagine what's possible, if we get this right...*
- Include shared regional values, such as:
  - Water quality and public health
  - Equity and social justice
  - Affordability
  - Sustainability, stewardship, and resiliency
  - Addressing impacts from climate change and other hazards
    - For example, building state-of-the-art facilities like the [Georgetown Wet Weather Treatment Station](#) to withstand climate impacts while improving water quality in the Duwamish River



# A vision for clean water would...

- Embrace innovative & “circular economy” approaches
  - Enhancing resource recovery and beneficial use, energy generation
    - Biogas WTD has been purifying and selling renewable natural gas from South Treatment Plant since 1987
    - Sewer heat recovery: First pilot project in South Lake Union executed through a public-private partnership
  - Controlling the sources of contamination – an upstream vs. end-of-pipe approach
- Reflect other environmental and related policy goals
  - Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Climate Action Plan, Clean Water Healthy Habitat, etc.
- Be included in RWSP policies
  - Help guide policy amendments and implementation





# Key roles for this effort

## County Executive:

- Articulate a vision for clean water and provide policy guidance
- Transmit recommended policies for legislative review/approval

## WTD:

- Refresh and use information already developed
- Perform research and analysis on key drivers for the system, trends and opportunities in the industry
- Seek input from interested parties (contract agencies, NGOs, community members, Tribes and others)
- Develop policy amendment options and related analyses
- Conduct environmental review and issue SEPA documents

# Key roles for this effort

## MWPAAC, cities, utilities and districts:

- Review technical analyses and work products including vision and policies
- Develop recommendations for Executive, RWQC and County Council
- Help ensure engagement with contract agencies is robust
- Provide key local perspectives and keep regional needs in mind

## Community members:

- Provide valuable perspectives and input especially from communities not traditionally included in wastewater policy planning

## Tribes and regulatory agencies:

- Provide review and comment on key work products

# Key roles for this effort

## RWQC:

- Confirm high-level principles to guide the process
  - Roles & responsibilities for RWQC, MWPAAC, and other parties
  - Timeline and key milestones
- Review and discuss current RWSP policies, review challenges and opportunities, and provide early policy input
- Recommend policy amendments to County Council

## County Council:

- Consider RWQC recommendations and adopt amendments



# Once the effort is complete, we will have...



Updated RWSP policies in King County Code for the regional wastewater system including a vision for clean water



Policies, plans, and documents that meet state requirements for Ecology approval of General Sewer Plan update

# Next steps for this work in 2024/25

- Coordinate RWSP update work with RWQC 2024/25 work plan
  - Monthly cadence for RWQC to review current RWSP policies
  - Identify early policy amendments for decision in 2025
  - Early comments on the vision for clean water
- Early policy amendments
  - WTD work, review by MWPAAC and interested parties
  - Executive transmits, RWQC reviews, County Council adopts
- Vision process, and analytical work on rest of policy amendments also commences
  - Timeline and engagement process to be presented at April RWQC

# Mission and opportunity

## Our Mission

*We protect public health and the environment by collecting and cleaning wastewater while recovering valuable resources for a healthy and resilient Puget Sound*

## Opportunity with this process

Create the system we want future generations to inherit







# Q&A and Discussion