

# Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee

King Street Center, 201 S Jackson St, MS: KSC-NR-5504, Seattle, WA 98104  
206-477-4435

**MEMBERS:**

- Alderwood Water and Wastewater District*
- City of Algona*
- City of Auburn*
- City of Bellevue*
- City of Black Diamond*
- City of Bothell*
- City of Brier*
- City of Carnation*
- Cedar River Water and Sewer District*
- Coal Creek Utility District*
- Cross Valley Water District*
- Highlands Sewer District*
- City of Issaquah*
- City of Kent*
- City of Kirkland*
- City of Lake Forest Park*
- Lakehaven Water and Sewer District*
- City of Mercer Island*
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe*
- Northeast Sammamish Sewer and Water District*
- Northshore Utility District*
- Olympic View Water and Sewer District*
- City of Pacific*
- City of Redmond*
- City of Renton*
- Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District*
- City of Seattle*
- City of Shoreline*
- Skyway Water and Sewer District*
- Soos Creek Water and Sewer District*
- City of Tukwila*
- Valley View Sewer District*
- Vashon Sewer District*
- Woodinville Water District*

April 24, 2024

The Honorable Dave Upthegrove  
Chair, King County Council  
516 Third Ave., Room 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104

SUBJECT: Wastewater Treatment Division 2025 Rate Recommendation

Dear Councilmember Upthegrove:

The Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAAC) is pleased to offer this letter to accompany the 2025 sewer rate proposal. The King County Council approves this rate on an annual basis, and MWPAAAC represents the 34 agencies (cities, special purpose districts and one tribal nation) that pay it. For many MWPAAAC agencies, the sewer treatment charges paid to King County are the largest single expenditure in our respective budgets, and thus the largest impact on each agency’s rate-making.

MWPAAAC supports the proposed 2025 sewer rate increase of 5.75 percent. We are pleased that this is the same increase projected in the rate forecast that accompanied the 2024 rate proposal. The consistency and predictability of the proposed rate allows member agencies to more accurately budget and communicate our own agencies’ rate increases to our ratepayers. However, **we continue to be concerned with the growth and affordability of the sewer rate over the long term**, shown in the 2025 – 2034 rate forecast.

**Long-Term Capital and Rate Forecasting**

Helping our agencies better understand system needs versus affordability over the long term, we are broadly supportive of the actions of the Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) over the past year.

Over the past few months, Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) staff and consultants engaged in a process to create a methodology for long-term capital forecasting, satisfying a RWQC motion. MWPAAAC participated as a close observer of this work and are generally satisfied with the final report and its recommendations.

The Honorable Dave Upthegrove

April 24, 2024

Page 2

A long-term capital forecast will supply MWPAAC and RWQC with a more complete picture of the system needs, allowing a more effective evaluation of rates forecasted in the near-term. This will also help us to assess the usage of debt vs. cash funding, a continuing concern to MWPAAC members. Another concern of MWPAAC is how rate affordability goals in the short term are balanced with the funding of non-discretionary expenditures over the long term. Put another way, we don't wish to front load affordability now at the expense of causing non-affordable rates in the future.

### **System Planning**

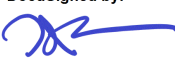
The Clean Water Plan process to update the Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) was paused in November 2021. MWPAAC is eager to see the system planning effort restart in 2024, with appropriate focus and specific goals. With the many complex issues facing WTD, the need for a comprehensive analysis of the system has perhaps never been greater. It's important that the RWSP update process allows for meaningful participation from MWPAAC member agencies during plan development. To that end, MWPAAC is ready to form a System Planning subcommittee to support this important work. Our work planning over the next several years will prioritize system planning discussions with County staff.

### **Sewage Agreement**

MWPAAC members anticipate revisiting Sewage Agreement discussions in 2025, prior to renegotiating the agreement. Understanding that negotiations will take significant time, and that parts may depend on the RWSP update, it would be prudent to begin reviewing work previously done in preparation for contract negotiations. Many current MWPAAC agency representatives were not present for the contract review work that took place from 2015 to 2019.

In closing, we wish to acknowledge the continuing positive relationship between MWPAAC and WTD. Recently, each year has brought improved communications, increased transparency, and closer collaboration. We are grateful for this constructive partnership, and we hope that, together with our RWQC colleagues, we can work together to make substantial progress on these regional issues.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
4ED96DE8E6FC467...  
John McClellan  
MWPAAC Chair

e-cc: King County Councilmembers  
MWPAAC Members  
The Honorable Dow Constantine, County Executive, King County  
John Taylor, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)  
Kamuron Gurol, Division Director, Wastewater Treatment Division, DNRP