



## **King County**

Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
Wastewater Treatment Division

# **West Point Treatment Plant Power Quality Improvement Project 2023 Public Meetings Summary**

## **Overview**

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) held its 2023 annual public meetings in person and virtually. The meetings informed the nearby community of the background and plans for capital improvements at West Point Treatment Plant. Each meeting presented historical context, project updates, highlights, and challenges. A Q&A session was held at the end of each meeting to allow attendees to ask questions and provide comments. These public meetings had the following goals:

- Expand the public's understanding of this facility's important role in our system, as well as what the County is doing to increase West Point's — and the wastewater system's — resiliency.
- Increase the public's confidence about the County's commitment to clean water and our stewardship of ratepayer dollars.
- Provide a clear message to the public about what actions are being taken to help ensure power reliability at West Point, and on what timeline.

## **Virtual public update meeting**

- Date: Thursday, Oct. 19
- Location: Online Zoom webinar
- Panelists: Gillian Haviland (S&A), Anne-Marie Le (S&A), Ryan Harlow (WTD), Tom Bauer (WTD), Mark Slepiski (WTD)
- Registrants: 17
- Attendees: 10

## **In-person public update meeting**

- Date: Thursday, Oct. 26
- Location: Magnolia Library
- Panelists: Frana Milan (S&A), Anne-Marie Le (S&A), Ryan Harlow (WTD), Felix Brandli (WTD)
- Registrants: 7
- Attendees: 3

## Question and answer sessions

During the Q&A sessions at each meeting, participants were encouraged to ask questions regarding the information presented. Questions were answered by Community Relations Planner Ryan Harlow and did not require expertise from other WTD panelists. Key themes from the Q&A included impacts on surrounding homes, future projects for the treatment plant and the potential for public tours.

Community members presented the following questions:

- **How will the projects at West Point affect surrounding homes?**
  - *Because West Point is obscured by Discovery Park, impacts are reduced compared to a project like a pipe replacement in a neighborhood street. Community members can expect occasional construction lights, increased vehicle traffic, and viewing of tall construction equipment like cranes. These will not be a regular occurrence. Notifications will be provided through email and potentially through door-to-door or mail notifications. If you have a concern or comment, please contact Ryan Harlow ([rharlow@kingcounty.gov](mailto:rharlow@kingcounty.gov) or 206-848-0814).*
- **Are there plans to increase public access to the waterfront?**
  - *WTD's West Point staff do not have the authority to increase access to these areas. Seattle Parks and Recreation are responsible for providing access to the South Beach and Lighthouse areas around West Point inside Discovery Park. We at WTD can and do work collaboratively with Seattle Parks and Recreation to maintain certain areas around West Point at the Lighthouse and South Beach areas.*
- **What is happening to prevent future spills?**
  - *A major goal of all the projects at West Point is to reduce the chance of an "untreated bypass" of wastewater into the Puget Sound. An "untreated bypass" is when wastewater coming to West Point goes directly past the plant without receiving treatment. Untreated bypass events can occur for several reasons including a heavy wastewater flow that is greater than the capacity of a plant to treat the flow. Another example is if critical equipment fails operate correctly and cannot be brought back into operation before the plant can treat the flow of wastewater.*
  - *With the completion of many West Point's capital improvement projects presented at this meeting, the chances of future untreated bypasses will be reduced - but never eliminated. Untreated bypasses are a last resort to protect staff and equipment from danger and damage, and to reduce potential street-level flooding of wastewater.*
- **What are the long term and short-term goals of the projects at West Point?**

- *Several long-term goals are to ensure the plant continues to treat wastewater to the highest standards; to upgrade the plant to meet the needs of the growing community; to withstand natural disasters like earthquakes; and to adapt to the effects of climate change while incorporating new technology that reduces the Plant's environmental impact.*
- *The short-term goals are to ensure construction projects are completed safely and efficiently; to allow operations and maintenance staff to complete their tasks with minimal construction interference and to limit the impacts of the construction on Discovery Park visitors and the surrounding community.*

- **What are the biggest risks with these projects? What is being done to mitigate the risks?**

- *The limited physical space within West Point is a challenge. Space for contractors and construction equipment is extremely limited. Plus, West Point staff need to ensure the plant is treating wastewater 24/7/365 while construction is happening. This requires effective coordination between plant staff, project teams, and construction contractors to ensure work can be completed safely and efficiently.*

*Several Plant staff are assigned to each construction project to help identify potential issues before work takes place. West Point's project teams are meeting regularly to coordinate efforts and share lessons learned from each other's projects. Additionally, West Point is pursuing a special contract that allows one contractor to oversee numerous projects. This reduces the need for contractor space and increases cross-project communication and coordination.*

*Funding this many projects is a challenge. WTD is pursuing several funding strategies from organizations like the Environmental Protection Agency and Washington State Department of Ecology. Many of these sources are low-interest loans that will need to be paid back. WTD is continually working with our agency partners and contractors to find ways to Reduce our projects' costs. Unfortunately, WTD will need to increase rates to ensure many projects are funded because many of our projects are necessary to meet regulatory requirements.*

- **Are public tours available at West Point?**

- *Currently the amount of construction at West Point makes it unsafe to provide public tours. Until West Point leadership believes that tours will remain safe from construction and not unduly interfere with plant operations, tours cannot take place. Previously, West Point held "Drop of Water" tours where visitors followed the journey of water moving throughout the plant. The tour route goes through several current and future construction areas. Eventually, public tours will return, but not for several more years. If you are interested in touring a King County wastewater treatment plant, the [South Treatment Plant](#) offers tours during certain times of the year to the public.*

- **What is the current processing yield at West Point? Will this change following the completion of construction projects at West Point?**
  - *The plant can treat a maximum of 440 million gallons per day, but it typically treats roughly 100 million gallons a day on average. Less is treated in the summer, and more is treated in the winter. The treatment capacity will not change with the completion of projects at West Point. Improvements to [stormwater infiltration and intrusion](#), pipe replacements and refurbishments, and additional projects like [the Ship Canal project](#) help reduce the amount of stormwater in the system or provide storage for wastewater until West Point can treat it. West Point's capacity will not need to be increased for now because of these efforts.*
  
- **Are there upcoming RFPs (Requests for Proposals) for construction management services at West Point?**
  - *Available contracts will be posted on [King County's procurement and payables page](#).*
  
- **For the power quality building, what are you hoping to get out of it? What have been past issues and what will this do for you?**
  - *The power quality building will house a new battery system for West Point, which will provide stable power to several vital pump systems during temporary power disruptions known as "power sags". Power sags are like brownouts – when the lights dim at your home, but you do not completely lose power. In the past, power sags at West Point have caused equipment to begin shutting down to protect plant pumps from damage. This has led to untreated bypasses and a [catastrophic treatment event](#) in the past. These power sags typically happen during heavy rain events, when the plant is operating near peak treatment flow. This will significantly reduce bypass events due to power reliability issues.*
  
- **Is there a pipe going further out to Puget Sound?**
  - *Yes, there is an outfall pipe from West Point that releases treated wastewater or effluent [3,600 feet out and is 240 feet deep in the water](#). You can learn more facts about West Point and our other plants here:*
  
- **Will the raw sewage pumps be electrical?**
  - *The new motors will be electric that will run the raw sewage pumps.*
  
- **Is it one trip per truck per day that takes solid waste away?**
  - *A container leaves West Point every other week carrying roughly 13 tons of solid waste per trip. That is roughly 26,000 pounds of trash and debris that has been screened out of the wastewater stream! It is the equivalent of nearly [105 Seattle Seahawks players](#) in each container.*

- *About four trucks per day leave West Point, carrying roughly 31.5 tons of wet Loop biosolids. That is nearly 126 tons per day or seven fully loaded Metro buses! [Loop biosolids](#) are used throughout the state for fertilizer and one way WTD recovers valuable resources.*