

**THURSTON COUNTY
STORM AND SURFACE WATER ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**September 15, 2022
Meeting Summary**

Representative	Representing	Present (P) Not Present (NP) Excused (E)
Jake Wager	At Large	P
Phyllis Farrell	District 1	E
Jaclynn Simmons (Chair)	District 2	NP
Britt Nederhood	District 3	P
Nancy Winters (Vice Chair)	At Large	P
David Hartley	District 1	P

Staff:

Larry Schaffner	Stuart Whitford	Cynthia Taylor	Sarah Ashworth
Sonja Cady			

Introductions/Process/Correspondence (Nancy Winters, Chair)

Introductions were made.

Public Comment

No members of the public were present

Amendments to the Agenda

No amendments to the agenda were made.

Meeting Summary

Nancy noted that the elections will be held in September and not November. Jake corrected the name of his neighborhood to Winnwood and not Windood. David Hartley moved to approve the meeting summary as amended. Britt Nederhood seconded. Motion carried.

K-12 Education & Outreach Programs (Cynthia Taylor)

Cynthia Taylor, Education and Outreach Specialist with Community Planning and Economic Development, coordinates outreach programs on behalf on the storm water utility. Education and outreach are components of the municipal stormwater permit. The Permit requires the County to provide general educational information to public, including children. The goal is to educate K-12 students on stormwater and provide an opportunity for them to become involved in stormwater stewardship activities. Staff used to provide services directly, but it is more cost effective to deliver required activities through contracts with nonprofits. There are three organizations that provide these resources: Chehalis Basin Education Consortium (CBE), South Sound Green (SSG), and the Nisqually River Education Program (NREP). These three work together to provide almost all Thurston County Schools with hands on learning and exploratory

science education. They represent different watersheds in the County and create training workshops for teachers and provide water quality monitoring training.

CBEC is a partnership of school districts and nonprofits to educate south county schools within the Chehalis watershed. They receive \$7.5k each year from the Utility.

SSG conducts watershed studies with over 60 classrooms. They work with schools in Olympia, Tumwater, Rainier, Griffin, and private schools. There is a 5-year contract for \$14,400 and \$5,000 a year for the McLane Nature Trail field trip program. In the last school year, SSG was able to take all 5th grade classrooms from North Thurston Schools on the field trip.

NREP focuses on watershed-based education and environmental action projects in the Nisqually river watershed. It engages students and teachers in water quality and monitoring programs, restoration projects, and creating education outreach materials. They received \$25,000 annually from Thurston County.

All three organizations contribute to water quality monitoring and participate in the Green Congress. The monitoring occurs in October and February, with trainings conducted for teachers and volunteers. Kids use test kits to evaluate water for dissolved oxygen, nitrates, pH, water temperature, turbidity, and bacteria. High school students filter the bacteria samples, incubate them, and count the fecal coliform levels after 24 hours. SSG has offered to have their students present their findings to SSWAB.

Green Congress is an event held at the Evergreen State College where the culmination of the data kids collect and is cataloged annually. Then they share the field research data from streams to recommend stewardship actions for their watersheds. This year, 575 students participated from 17 schools.

The McLane Creek field trip program presented by SSG works with the Stream Team Salmon Stewards program. The educational field trip provides an opportunity for kids to observe the local chum salmon run and learn how stormwater runoff impacts streams. They learn how they can take actions to reduce stormwater pollution and make connections to why that is important to the salmon habitat. Salmon Steward volunteers assist with the field trips to teach kids about the spawning chum.

Cynthia shared data from 2021. The three organizations received a total of \$40,380 in 2021, which served over 4000 students. This year Cynthia will conduct analyses to ensure schools are receiving fair coverage of funding.

Stream Team partners with other local jurisdictions working for clean water. Stream Team, a regional volunteer program, focuses on providing residents with education related to stormwater and opportunities to participate in stewardship activities. It is coordinated by the County and Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater. Thurston County contribute \$33,000 annually. This investment helps contribute to meeting the Permit's education and outreach requirements by doing the following:

- The Stream Team Newsletter printed 4547 copies in 2021. The newsletter advertises programs and family friendly engagement.
- Marine Creature Monday is one of the most well attended events, this summer 213 people (mostly children) attended in July and August. A diver pulls up different creatures and explains how stormwater can effect marine life as well as actions they can take to protect their habitat.
- McLane Creek Salmon Stewards educate the public on the weekends on the impact of stormwater to habit and actions they can take to reduce pollution.
- The County contract with the WSU extension and coordinates volunteer events to maintain McLane Creek trails and make it accessible for field trips.

Thurston youth WIN! (Work Involvement Now!) - The program is not going on now. Prior to the start of the pandemic, the County coordinated this program to encourage youth groups in unincorporated Thurston County to participate in annual events and community projects that address storm water issues. The program will be continued next year. The County provides stipends of up to \$400 to sponsor up to 10 youth groups that successfully complete an approved youth project totaling 40 hours of volunteer labor. An added benefit reducing the number of youth charity car wash fund raisers. Examples of projects include cleaning and removing of invasive weeds from neighborhood stormwater ponds.

Cynthia is conducting a study to see how the outreach is working, with about 10% of the budget is dedicated to the study. The equity analysis will give more information on the return on the investment and how to be more targeted and equitable on their programing. This data will be presented at a later date.

Q. Britt asked why Nisqually gets 3-4 times more funding than SSG.

A. Cynthia doesn't know; they may have more programming. SSG does most of the teacher training for Green Congress, she will get back with an answer.

Q. Nancy - How soon will the WIN program be reinstated?

A. Cynthia – I'm new and have not been able to work on the project. Hopefully it will start up again at the beginning of the year.

Q. David stated that two organizations get roughly \$7,000 to \$8,000, which doesn't seem like a great deal since they reach so many students. Do they have other funding sources? Do cities provide support?

A. Cynthia answered that yes, they do receive funds from cities as well, but it is unknown at what level. Cynthia plans to make a list of all schools involved to ensure there are no gaps.

Q. Nancy – is there any water quality programming being delivered by our partners at Littlerock schools?

A. Cynthia will look into this and get back with an answer.

Q. Stuart asked whether Thurston County is a part of Thurston EcoNet?

A. Cynthia answered yes.

Cynthia shared that there will be a \$250 award for an Instagram reel sharing to post what you enjoy about the Puget Sound or a cleanup idea.

Larry added that the Washington Stormwater Center recently created a new position for education and outreach support

Monitoring- 2021 Lake & Streams Water Quality Reports (Stuart Whiteford and Sarah Ashworth)

Sarah Ashworth presented findings from the 2021 Lake Water Quality Report. The report looked at ten lakes in the County. The objective of the monitoring program is to collect baseline information about the water quality and quantity in Thurston County streams and lakes. They monitor for algae, nutrients, temperature, dissolved oxygen, visibility, clarity, and in response to algae blooms. They studied ten lakes and used tropic state indexes which measure whether a lake is in good, fair, or poor condition. The red category indicates an algae bloom advisory.

Samples are taken from the deepest parts of basin for algae, this can mean more than one sample per lake. Most lakes have a lot of plant growth, not much flow, and a lot of nutrients. The algae bloom tests are triggered by public calls and they tend to bloom at different times of year. The County also sample lake water once a month in the summers and could potentially detect an algae bloom, though the algae bloom testing is typically response driven.

Sarah presented the data on ten Thurston County lakes. This year there is a new report format that is simpler and intended to be more of a one-pager. Previous reports were 90 or so pages and very in-depth. The more in-depth reports will be done every three years.

The 2019 to 2021 Streams Report shows the eight watersheds in Thurston County and 36 sample sites. Ecology uses the water quality index looking at four components: temperature, E. coli (now fecal coliform), nutrients, and dissolved oxygen. Sites indicated are *green* are of low concern, *yellow* moderate, and *red* high. High concern sites get forwarded to Stuart for follow-up via the PIC program. Sarah shared information on each stream in the report.

Q. Larry asked where dose the sampling occur for streams?

A. The sites are historical and designed to be as close to the mouths as possible, up to the point where there is no saltwater-related impact. They usually coincide with public crossings, bridges, and convergences. They are looking to change some of the sites' sampling locations.

Jake stated that he appreciates both reports, it's a great geography lesson for someone who is new to the area. Very insightful, he suggested adding a geographical reference to each

location. Stuart added that they can add well known landmarks on the map to help locate them.

Nancy shared that she loves the format and also has suggestions, such as adding information in the introduction of the lakes report stating that there is a natural process that lakes go through and that humans also impact water quality. She suggested including actions that contribute to adverse water quality. She also suggested adding descriptions on how temps and turbidity are impacted.

Sarah stated that she thinks it is important to share what can contribute to water quality impacts, but that she is hesitant to point fingers at the problems. The ambient monitoring program focuses on the research and reporting side.

PIC Project Report Stuart Whitford

PIC projects address E. coli bacteria pollution in streams and along the shorelines of the bay. The State Department of Health were doing their own reports since the 1980's. Through grants, local jurisdictions on the Puget Sound have been funding their own shoreline projects. Stuart started working in this area in 1994. The state legislature allocated public health funds to address health disparities statewide. At Thurston County, a chunk of those funds is allocated towards PIC projects. Stuart was happy to share that there are now four full time staff members. The County will be capable of doing a lot more, like responding to complaints and conducting marine shoreline surveys looking for E. coli bacteria and pollution. Previously, surveys were done every 12 years. Now they will be able to test more frequently and catch hot spots along the shoreline. The County started marine shoreline testing at Totten Inlet. Tests are done in dry and wet conditions where multiple hot spots were identified, all of which are under investigating now. Some of the hot spots can be attributed to wildlife and some to failing septic systems, which can be enforced. So far there is not any linkage to agriculture. Thurston County has a robust regulatory structure that enables them to address farms or areas with run off issues. The local onsite code enables enforcement of septic failures when needed.

Black Lake will be the subject of a major PIC project next year. There will be sampling to identify E.coli hot spots. Lakes are difficult to conduct PIC projects because outfall pipes can be under the water. In the summer they will likely do a dry weather screening to sample for bacteria and to see if there are any pipes. They will also sample any drainage that flows into the lake and trace hot spots back as far as they can go. They will plan to test around 400 on-site septic systems which will take roughly four years. They will be working with the Black Lake Management District beginning on October 5th.

Sarah shared information on streams with ongoing hot spots that are regularly monitored, with Stuart's group developing a plan for a future PIC project. He has taken all the ambient E.coli bacteria sample data to address issues in a prioritized way. He would like to come back to SSWAB another time with more in-depth details on current PIC projects. Stuart noted that they are required to contact Larry's group when there is a hot spot from a County outfall.

Q. David asked what the procedure is to monitor and evaluate the data regarding septic system issues like on Black lake? How can the failing point be located?

A. Stuart shared that dye tracing is one of the primary tools used. They also start sampling at the lake or the stream and segment sections and continue with land use records, mapping, and Assessor record searching. This leads to meeting with property owners directly and requesting permission to inspect on site. When unable to take a sample, they do dye testing which can take 3-4 weeks. Stuart added that the staff are great working with the public to ease concerns and diffuse difficult situations.

Nancy requested the presentation on PIC projects be done in January because she will not be present at the November meeting.

SSWAB Elections (Larry Schaffner)

- Nancy announced that she will be stepping down as co-chair because she will be missing several meetings next year due to her teaching in Tanzania. Nancy also shared that Jaclynn will be stepping down as chair.
- Britt informed SSWAB that he would not be a good candidate as his term expires in the spring. He nominated David.
- Discussions continued for several minutes. Larry added that the chair and co-chair have a lot of support from staff as well as support from the agenda subcommittee.
- Jake nominated David as co-chair and David nominated Jake as the Chair. Both accepted.
- Nancy made a motion to accept the nominees, Britt seconded. Motion carried.

SSWAB General Discussion (SSWAB Members)

- Debrief outcome of BoCC Presentation-
 - David shared that it was well done!
- Debrief on County Fair-
 - David volunteered on Sunday and there was not a large turnout, likely due to the heat. David was actively trying to recruit people to apply for SSWAB while there.
 - Jake added that there were some nice handouts that drew people in but would like to have more visuals and maps next year. He too was trying to recruit members.
- General Updates-None
- Updates on Action Items- Larry followed up with Nate about stormwater field trips and they identified two subdivisions that would be good candidates to show older and newer BMP technology. They both have easy and safe access. The field trip is in the works, hopefully in October.
- SSWAB's pending vacancies –
 - David suggested reaching out to each staff support to the BoCC to help find SSWAB candidates. Larry has given the email contacts to the agenda subcommittee. Larry thinks it would be beneficial to have SSWAB members contact their districts Commissioner as well.
 - Nancy suggested an official letter from SSWAB to all the Commissioners.
 - David suggests submitting letters and phone calls.

- Jake suggested that he and David meet at a regularly scheduled Commissioner meeting for an introduction as the new chair and vice chair of SSWAB and request their help with filling vacancies.
- Larry added that the publishing of SPLASH tends to generate interest in joining SSWAB.
- David asked if the outreach staff for projects, like Nate Ensley would be able to help promote the vacancies. Their public outreach regarding projects generates a lot of interest.
- Jake asked who the primary contact for the McLane Creek Stewardship program is, they may like to help promote vacancies.
- SSWAB reports on outreach in community- discussed above
- Topics for next meeting- November is lined up

Action Items

- Cynthia will investigate why SSG get more funding allocations and get back to SSWAB with an answer.
- Larry will follow-up with Utility staff (e.g., Cynthia and Nate) to assist with SSWAB recruitment outreach efforts.
- SSWAB members will reach out to BoCC and their assistants regarding SSWAB vacancy recruitment.

The next meeting will be November 17, 2022.

Meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm