

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

**March 20, 2021
Meeting Summary**

Representative	Representing	Present (P) Not Present (NP) Excused (E)
Casey Kramer (Chair)	District 2	E
Andrew Harding	District 1	E
Phyllis Farrell	District 1	P
Clayton Hill (Vice Chair)	At Large	E
Paula Holroyde	District 3	P
Jaclynn Simmons	District 2	P
Britt Nederhood	District 3	P
Carla Sabotta	At Large	P
Nancy Winters	At Large	P

Staff:

Larry Schaffner	Ami Peters	Miriam Villacian
Ryan Langan	Jane Mountjoy-Venning	Ann Marie Pearce

Guests:

None

Introductions/Process/Correspondence (*Jaclynn Simmons*)

Introductions were made.

Public Comment

None

Amendments to the Agenda

None

Meeting Summary

Paula moved to approve the meeting minutes for the March 18, 2021 meeting as written. Britt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Andrew Harding (District one) has decided to retire from SSWAB due to new work-related obligations. Recently, an application was received from someone who resides in District one.

Performance Metrics Update by Staff (*Ryan Langan & Jane Mountjoy-Venning*)

Ryan reviewed 2020 calendar year performance metrics for Stormwater Utility.

- 100% of municipally owned/operated outfalls (138) were inspected for 2020.
- For catch basins, the municipal permit requires 50% be inspected. For 2020 we inspected about 48% (5150)
 - o Areas outside of the regulated area, 63% (631) of catch basins were inspected

What does an inspection look like?

- Staff removes the catch basin grate and looks at the sediment level. If it exceeds 1/3 the depth of the sump, then it triggers cleaning (i.e., sediment removal). We find that about 20% of the structures need cleaning.
- They also look at the frame covers and the pipes into and out of the catch basin. If there is something that needs corrected, a workorder is created and the deficiencies are corrected.

What does inspection for outfalls look like?

- Staff bring boat to the shore and inspects from the water. They look for discoloration and sediment accumulations. No correction needs were noted on the ones inspected this year.
- If seen an unfamiliar color, they will do source tracing to try to identify the source where it is coming from. They also have the ability to take samples and have them analyzed in the lab to help identify pollutant sources. If clear fluid flows during a dry period, they will send it to the lab to evaluate it for the presence of fecal coliform.

How many of the 138 do they do lab testing on?

- None in 2020

The lab used is operated by Thurston County.

100% of the stormwater treatment and flow control facilities were inspected (156)

Outfall discharge

- untreated 40.6% (56)
- treated per standards 16.7% (23)
- treated via vegetated conveyance ditches (42.7%) (59)

Nancy mentioned she lives near one of the conveyance ditches. Public Works staff mows the grass but will cut into the dirt. This means that the next time it rains, untreated soil gets carried off into Woodard Creek.

Paula mentioned a presentation from the Stormwater Center. They inferred that our water going into Puget sound isn't very good. How do we spot that without doing any tests?

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Does the county monitor any outfalls that are not County owned?

- No, we do not. We have them mapped but we do not monitor them.

Why are 40.6% of the outfalls untreated?

- The infrastructure ranges in age all the way back to the 1900's, the systems are designed to capture runoff and direct it away from the street to avoid flooding. There isn't sufficient funding to reengineer and upgrade all these historic systems installed before current runoff treatment standards or requirements.

Is there a way to phase in or look at what could be improved?

- This is why the Stormwater Capital Facilities Plan exists, to look at large projects like this. Two outfalls are going through the process for replacement or improvement, there may be others.

There is another new obligation in the Stormwater Permit called Stormwater Management Action Planning that involves evaluating discharges to receiving waters and assessing risk/priorities to guide various elements of the stormwater program, including retrofits. This would be a good topic for SSWAB later this year.

Phyllis mentioned that as an advisory board we could think about recommending some priorities.

Per Larry, that is what the new obligation for Stormwater Management Action Planning is all about. Municipal discharges to surface waters will be looked at. Part of the process will include SSWAB and public involvement.

The number of assets we identify with some level of deficiency. The correct number is 1787 (52 open work orders) These are ones that have not been corrected.

What are some examples of the corrections being made?

- For catch basins, it could involve cleaning by vactoring out the sediment. re-grouting, or replacing a broken grate.
- For treatment flow control facilities, it could be vegetation control or replacing treatment cartridge in one of the concrete vaults.

SSWAB had asked about the tracking the number of flood-related road closures. The County Engineer has decided to have admin staff at Public Works begin using VUEWorks for this task. Ryan is training staff to handle call intake and gather information on the location to put it into the GIS system to be able to query if there are clusters of calls.

A 10-year weather event is a storm event that happens in a 24-hour period, on average, once every 10 years. A 24-hour storm event is approximately 4.33" of rainfall.

The effort to start tracking road closures due to flooding came from the request made by SSWAB. The conversation lead the County to find a solution.

Jane talked about the pollution identification and correction program. This program is funding mostly from a grant. The grant funding that we have right now (one is about \$500,000) focuses on shellfish protection, specifically bacteria levels. Our ambient water quality program is the initial driver along with the State Department of Health's monitoring of marine waters. Combining the data helps us identify areas of concern. We are well on the way on the Green Cove project which flows into Eld Inlet. We were finding a lot of bacteria in our samples, so we identify the hotspot by continuing the sampling upstream to track down the source(s). We are doing a lot of site visits in that area to deal with septic issues and pet waste. We are also working with Ryan on sampling stormwater outfalls in a few areas, one is Woodland Creek Estates. The initial assessment didn't reveal red flags, so we are considering what to do next.

These two grants come from the National Estuary Program through the Department of Health Shellfish Initiative.

What type of cleanup happens or what can be done with the hotspots that are found?

- It isn't the County going in and cleaning them up, this is people on their private land. They look at the area and search their septic system records as well as visually looking for the issue through walk by or drive by. From this work comes a rating. Then staff makes at least 5 attempts to contact the individual. Staff will coach the citizen on the issue and how they can prevent it going forward.

What is the grant money used for?

- Part pays for salaries and lab fees. There is a program to provide rebates to put the riser lids on the septic. These lids make it easier to maintain the septic system. It also covers cost-share for low income septic system owners. It cost about \$500 to have an average septic system pumped.

Do you refer people to Volunteer Stewardship Program (VSP) to get technical and financial assistance for funding?

- Yes, citizens with chickens, rabbits, ducks, or other farm animals get referred to the Thurston Conservation District.

The grants come from passthrough funding from EPA. There are a lot of requirements that make it difficult to go through the process in a two-year time span.

How many shellfish districts do we have in Thurston County?

- We have two shellfish protection districts (marine recovery areas) – Henderson and Nisqually reach.
- We have many other shellfish growing area, such as Totten Inlet, Eld Inlet, and the northern part of Budd Inlet.
- The grant applies to all areas.

Has the water quality in these areas improved?

- Henderson is the one we have been at the longest. About 350 acres of shellfish beds has reopened. The TMDL study a few years ago was approved. Department of Ecology has a story map about this on their website.

One of the marine stations in Henderson Inlet is on the threatened list so we are putting more effort there. With the TMDL follow-up study, water quality had improved, except for Dobbs Creek and Fleming Creek.

Is the County inclined to use drones to look at the problem areas?

- No, there would likely be citizen concerns with this and isn't something we are doing at this time.

SPLASH/Utility Communications (*Ann Marie Pearce*)

SPLASH is a newsletter that is mailed to ratepayers once a year. In past years it used to be mailed out in early to mid-February but now it is being mailed out in the Fall.

It had been a few years since the format has been reviewed, so it's being reviewed before the next mailout. Education & Outreach (E&O) staff revised the newsletter so that it:

- Complies with the County's new Style Guide,
- Incorporates Plain Talk guidelines, which simplifies the language for the public to understand,
- Incorporates other communications practices to improve readability,
- Includes a section to report on priority metrics for the stormwater utility, and
- Includes sections to highlight a project, best management practices, important contact information and other important program information.

Miriam designed the graphic design and layout in-house. She joined the County within the last year and has graphic design experience, so that is helpful for the County.

The draft that is being presented today is simply a draft open to feedback from SSWAB.

- Cover page would act like a table of contents
- There are a couple options for visuals.
- Option #1 shows an infographic style with about 6 highlights or metrics. This page would also show a website reference for people to get more information if they'd like to. We would also highlight a project, such as the Albany street stormwater pond.

Phyllis suggested that we provide some of the information that Ryan provided about how they inspect their outfalls.

- Option #2 is more bullet style than infographic. It would be cleaner with less photos. This option still allows for a link for people to dive deeper if they would like to know more.

Nancy mentioned that she liked the monthly fee being displayed.

Jaclynn mentioned that that information about the monthly fee would be good to have on the infographic version.

- On another page it talks about stormwater and what causes pollution. The information on this page would be really high level and the weblink would dive deeper with more information.

Phyllis mentioned that there are a lot of runoff from roofs and maybe we should mention that along with moss treatment chemicals that run off from roofs.

Nancy mentioned how much impervious surfaces has changed pollution and the runoff we have in urbanized areas compared to a forested land.

Paula mentioned helping people connect the dots to understand where things go once they go down the storm drain.

- On another page we could divide the page by 4 squares and highlight a staff member, talk about picking up dog poop, fertilizers (using slow release instead), safety information about flooding, and “turn around don’t drown”
 - o The County gets credit for providing a certain level of education to the public which improves its federal Community Rating System level, a program providing discounts on flood insurance.

Nancy mentioned that people don’t really need to use fertilizer, so maybe we could mention that.

- The last page would be for the mailing address and important contact information.

Are we limited to 8 pages?

- It must be done in 4s, and we wanted to keep it short and sweet and kept it to 8 pages, but we are not limited to that specifically. The price goes up when we add more pages. We mail it to about 44,000 people or more.

Ann Marie is open to more suggestions from SSWAB on this topic. Please send the ideas to Larry; he will send out a reminder email on the deadline. The goal is to have all comments on the graphic design, layout, and story ideas back by June 8th.

BoCC Briefing Preparation

Nancy mentioned that we could bring up when Jane’s group goes out and does the pollution identification, it would be nice if we weren’t just tied to a grant. This way, more could get done without having to go through the hoops of grant writing and tracking. So, we could ask to increase the rate to have more funding to support those programs.

Larry mentioned that SSWAB could mention to the Commissioners that they previously brought forth the topic about tracking flooded roadways and how that resulted in the County deciding to collect and track report on that data.

Nancy added that we might mention contamination and ask for more funds to support additional monitoring. Maybe we would need money for monitoring and prioritize areas on what the Stormwater Center was presenting on. Nancy mentioned that there were some things that Lisa and Heidi mentioned (toxics) that aren’t being monitored now. We may need to go back and look at their presentation and see what toxics they referenced.

Phyllis added that it might be expensive to send things to the lab but maybe we can suggest up to 10 ranked sites, so if County staff are out looking at something, they can take samples and test when they find something.

Larry mentioned the cost of testing is usually the lesser expense. There is a lot of things that go into collecting stormwater samples correctly, including equipment. The County doesn’t do that

kind of monitoring or have the equipment. If we spent a lot of money on monitoring, we may not have enough to fix the problem. The data Lisa and Heidi had presented was not collected at a resolution helpful to identify hot spots.

Nancy suggested that the County could have something like a budget place holder for looking at one or two sites per year since it is expensive.

Larry added that this topic might feed into another process (Stormwater Management Action Plan). This could be a way to identify and target enhanced monitoring needs.

Heidi and Lisa's presentation is on the SSWAB website. We could bring that information to the Commissioners as part of the briefing.

Briefing will be a ½-hour time slot and will happen in June or July; more likely to occur in July. Larry will have ½-hour to review the annual report submittal and then SSWAB has an additional ½-hour after Larry's briefing.

Larry recommends that SSWAB members get their thoughts over to Casey and Clay so they can prepare the briefing.

Phyllis suggested the briefing take place after the July SSWAB meeting. All agreed that would be best.

The County Manager recently spoke highly of the SSWAB as an advisory board. The briefings have been effective.

Do other counties have SSWAB groups?

Some do. Larry attends meetings with peers from other jurisdictions. He has mentioned SSWAB and the feedback they provide to the County. Larry mentioned he could go looking for examples of other SSWAB groups and set up a meeting with them and SSWAB if there's interest. Phyllis would like to see what they are focusing on and what their best management practices are.

There are different interjurisdictional stormwater coordination groups.

How do our rates compare to other counties?

- Thurston County has a lower rate than most other cities and counties in western Washington State. This would also be a good topic to bring up in the briefing.

SSWAB General Discussion

Scope of focus for proposed DERT presentation in July?

- Capital lake is polluted and the DERT advocate removal of the dam. There is a report (DES updates) that was out last week. A broader interest might be the healthy watershed work that they are doing. SSWAB has talked about before the whole Estuary is beyond the County's jurisdiction, but the Healthy Sounds Watershed program might be the topic

of interest for SSWAB. Paula had some suggestions on this topic, but she has left the meeting. This might be something to bring up to the agenda subcommittee.

Action Items

- Paula Holroyde asked for an updated hard copy of Thurston County Water Resources Monitoring Report.
- Ryan to touch base with Public Works Maintenance staff about mowing into the soil on vegetative ditches.
- We should mention our concern about untreated outfalls to the County Commissioners when we speak to them
- SSWAB expressed interest in bringing Jane back to talk more (future agenda item)
- Larry will reach out to SSWAB to remind them of the deadline on feedback on the SPLASH newsletter. (Deadline is June 8th on submitting comments and story ideas)
- Larry will reach out to Heidi and Lisa on the follow up that the SSWAB asked about during their presentation.
- Larry will contact to Clay, Casey, and the Commissioner's office about setting a date for the SSWAB briefing.

The next meeting will be July 15, 2021.

Meeting adjourned at 7:36 pm