

Water Resources Healthy Lakes Program

Lake Management District FAQs



What are the options for communities who would like to do lake management activities?

There are several organizational structures communities can consider when choosing to organize. Each structure is different, and many factors should be considered when considering the options, which include:

- Lake Associations
- Homeowner Associations
- Lake Management Districts
- Special Districts

What is a Lake Management District?

A Lake Management District (LMD) is a county administered program, bound by county policies, procedures and rules. The boundaries of the district are determined during the formation process, and the district is operational for a set period. County staff serve as program administrators and subject matter experts. All permits, contracts and activities are managed by county staff, and the county assumes liability of approved activities.

How is a LMD different from other organization structures?

A LMD is different in that it forms a county program, and the county is liable for activities occurring under the approved plan. County staff are fully responsible for implementing the work plans and activities. LMDs are very different from Special Districts or Lake Associations, which are self-governed and rely on residents or consultants as subject matter experts.

How is a LMD funded?

LMDs are funded through charges on lake-area properties. Annual charges are attached to annual tax statements and are collected by the County Treasurer.

Does the county pay for the costs of a LMD?

No. The cost of supporting a LMD is the responsibility of the ratepayers within the district. A proposed financing

plan is developed during the formation process and should consider the full cost of operating the activities of the district.

What activities can a LMD finance?

A LMD can finance a broad range of activities, including:

- Aquatic vegetation management
- Education and outreach
- Water quality improvement
- Studies and water quality monitoring
- Measures to maintain lake levels

What are the typical costs of operating a LMD?

A typical expenditure budget for a LMD will include staffing costs (including benefits), internal costs, such as costs for office space, equipment used, information technology, insurance, and other internal costs which are allocated to all county funds, operational costs associated with the district work plan implementation, and professional services for lake activities such as vegetation management.

What is the process for forming a LMD?

There are many steps involved in forming a LMD. Included in the steps are a vote by the affected property owners, and several actions and public hearings by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC). Communities should reach out to staff for more detailed information on the formation process.

What voice do affected property owners have in forming a LMD?

The formation of a LMD is contingent upon a vote of the affected property owners. Votes are weighted one vote for each dollar of proposed assessment. The proposed district must receive a simple majority of the returned votes to be formed.

How long does the LMD formation process take?

The typical process can take 8-10 months or longer from the time the county receives a petition from the

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community.

How much does it cost for the county to form a LMD?

Communities should expect the cost of forming a LMD to be \$10,000-\$12,000. Currently, a \$5,000 deposit is required prior to consideration of a petition. Communities should be prepared to fund formation process prior to submitting a petition.

Who manages the LMD?

LMDs are managed and operated by Public Works staff, who are responsible for carrying out the short and long-term work plans of the district while adhering to any permits, best management practices. County policies, state and federal laws and ensuring the work plan is in alignment with other BoCC approved programs.

What is a LMD advisory committee?

A LMD advisory committee consists of five community elected ratepayers, who actively engage with county staff during advisory committee meetings to provide input and information for shaping short and long-term programs and management strategies consistent with the lake management goals outlined by the community. Advisory committees serve in an advisory capacity, and do not have decision making authority.

How are advisory committees elected and how long are their terms?

Advisory committee members are elected by a simple ballot method distributed via a special mailing to ratepayers and administered by county staff. The first election is administered within 90 days of formation. Initial advisory committee members serve for an approximate two-year term, ending on December 31st. Subsequent elections will be administered by Thurston County during November of the calendar year preceding the expiration of the current term. Advisory committee members will then serve two-year terms.

Who manages the advisory committee?

Advisory committees are coordinated and managed by county staff, who manage elections, create and distribute meeting schedules and agendas, and solicit feedback on

goals and objectives.

What are the roles and responsibilities of county staff?

In general, county staff is responsible for the following:

- Administering the LMD under the provisions of RCW 36.61.
- Serving as technical experts regarding all lake management activities, ensuring best management practices and sound lake management decision making.
- Ensuring adherence to all state and federal regulations, and all county approved policies and procedures. Staff will ensure lake management activities are in alignment with greater county initiatives and guiding principles.
- Developing and implementing short and long-term lake management work plans and strategies.
- Administering procurement and management of all contractors and professional services needed to carry out the LMD work plan.
- Reporting annually to the Storm and Surface Water Utility (SSWU) to ensure work plans and messaging align with and support the goals of the utility. Ensure reports are submitted to support SSWU fee reductions as available.
- Acting as the point of contact for communicating with contractors and field experts, including state and federal agencies.
- Managing financial activities and responsibilities in alignment with generally accepted accounting principles and county financial policies and procedures, applied consistently throughout Public Works.
- Providing quarterly financial reports.
- Maintaining a advisory committee, comprised of community elected ratepayers. Managing elections per the process outlined.
- Creating and distributing meeting schedules and agendas as needed to support annual work plans and solicit constructive feedback on short and long-term goals and objectives.
- Serving as facilitator at all advisory committee

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meetings.

What are the roles and responsibilities of the advisory committee?

In general, advisory committees are responsible for the following:

- Actively engaging with county staff during advisory committee meetings to provide input and information to assist the staff with shaping short and long-term programs and management strategies that are consistent with the lake management goals outlined by the community.
- Acting as a liaison between county staff and LMD community members.
- Supporting county staff in achieving alignment between LMD goals and work plans with all BoCC approved policies and plans, including the county's Integrated Pest Management Policy, Shoreline Management Program, and the Thurston County Stormwater Management Program.
- Communicating with county designated staff, not directly with county-managed consultants, contractors or regulatory agency personnel unless prearranged by county staff.
- Representing and communicating as a member of the LMD advisory committee, not as an agent of Thurston County.

Are there other rules or guidance documents related to LMDs?

Yes. LMDs are guided by Thurston County Healthy Lakes Program – Administrative Rules for Lake Management Districts.

Do other County policies and programs affect LMDs?

Yes. There are a host of policies and programs that LMDs must be in alignment with. These include BoCC adopted policies and plans, including the County's Integrated Pest Management Policy, Shoreline Management Program, and the Thurston County Stormwater Management Program. Additionally, LMDs must adhere to all other relative county policies, including but not limited to

safety, procurement, and financial topics.

What is an Integrated Aquatic Vegetation Management Plan (IAVMP)?

An IAVMP is a planning document developed to ensure the best available information about the lake is considered prior to initiating control efforts. IAVMPs are required, at the expense of the LMD, prior to the implementation of any vegetation management activities that involve herbicides. All IAVMPs must adhere to the county's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) policy and must be updated every 10 years.

What's this I hear about a reduction to my storm and surface water fee?

Per current Thurston County Code, Chapter 15.06.040 (D), ratepayers of LMDs are eligible to receive a storm and surface water fee reduction of fifty percent or the amount of the charge from the district, whichever is less, provided the district is actively engaged in projects and programs which have water quality improvement as a primary goal and align with county water quality goals and messaging. To qualify for the fee reduction, annual work plans must be submitted to the Storm and Surface Water Utility and discussed prior to July of the year preceding the work plan implementation. Based upon the water quality improvement goals and messaging proposed in draft work plans, the county will either accept the work plan as meeting the requirements of the fee reduction criteria or will recommend an enhanced program to meet the intent of the code language.

Additionally, LMDs must submit an annual report by February 28th to the Storm and Surface Water Utility, summarizing work plan efforts that were conducted during the previous calendar year to meet the obligations outlined.

