

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

**May 18th, 2023
Meeting Summary**

Representative	Representing	Present (P) Not Present (NP) Excused (E)
Jake Wager (Chair)	At Large	P
Edward O'Brien	At Large	P
Britt Nederhood	District 3	NP
Nancy Winters	At Large	P
David Hartley (Vice Chair)	District 1	P
Zahid Chaudhry	District 3	P
Phyllis Farrell	District 1	P
Daniel Vlad	District 2	P

Staff:

Larry Schaffner, Nate Ensley, Ryan Langan, Stuart Whitford, Cynthia Taylor, Nicole Ross

Introductions/Process/Correspondence (Jake Wager, Chair)

Introduction were made.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Amendments to the Agenda (Jake Wager, Chair)

No amendments to the agenda were made.

Meeting Summary (Jake Wager, Chair)

No changes to the meeting summary. Nancy moved to approve meeting summary. Edward second, motion carried.

SPLASH/Utility Communications (Cynthia Taylor)

Cynthia provided an overview of the annual SPLASH newsletter and sought content feedback for the 2023 edition. The SSWAB members offered the following suggestions:

1. Revisit the topic of the pet waste stations usage.
2. Announce the new dashboard that will house ambient monitoring program-collected data.
3. Communicate water quality trends revealed by the data. Perhaps, include a positive story about progress made in improving water quality over this last year.
4. Provide a feature story on Albany Pond retrofit project.
5. Share any improvements on the pollution levels reductions.
6. Introduce 6PPD-q and the effect we currently understand stormwater contaminate poses.

7. Provide examples of do-it-yourself projects that a homeowner can do to advance a particular stormwater cause.
8. Highlight a lakeshore owner that is “doing the right thing”.
9. Provide the County’s or other jurisdiction’s experiences with incentive efforts to date.

Cynthia will send out a draft of the newsletter topics once they start to take shape. She encouraged SSWAB to email her additional ideas.

Agricultural and Forestry Nonpoint Pollution (Nora Carman-White & Ashley Arai)

Nora provided an overview of the Thurston Conservation District (TCD) and their purview in Thurston County. TCD, a sub-division of a state agency, offers a voluntary, non-regulatory resource for community members to utilize. Ashley followed with explaining Thurston County has the regulatory role that includes establishing and implementing regulations for the community. Ashley explained that many the forestry practices in Thurston County fall outside of the County’s jurisdiction and are overseen by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources. TCD and the County overlap as they partner to support correction of regulatory violations, collaborate on permitting process for implementing projects, and partner on education and incentive programs.

Nora shared TCD’s voluntary and non-regulatory approaches to supporting agricultural producers maintain water quality. Key components for helping landowners include providing access to technical and planning services, cost-share, market and land access support, and referrals.

TCD is not responsible for monitoring river and stream water quality, as Thurston County Public Health and Social Services provides this service through their ambient monitoring program.

Farm planning services often occur as ownership changes while exploring new options for the land. Other reasons that a farm plan update would happen involves length of time in place, or when trying to use a plan to secure cost-share funding the plan requires updating every ten years. Additional triggers include significant changes in management practices or number of livestock.

From the County’s side, farm plan updates are usually triggered on a complaint basis. Ashley reviewed the nuisance data, of the 24,000 records in the last 20 years, less than 400 related to agriculture. Of those, a third related to manure management in some way and a third of the manure management complaints related to a waterway concern. A right-to-farm ordinance exists in the County, where most of the activities are allowed and out-right permitted for long-standing farms. Items such as manure spreading, smell, or instream activities are allowed. While they cannot expand the activity, they are allowed to continue with past practices.

Recently, the County created a pathway to aid agricultural landowners to navigate the critical areas ordinance permitting process to correct structures, install fencing, or build manure sheds. One of the new provisions of the County’s conservation planning approach requires a current farm conservation plan.

The Voluntary Stewardship Program allows for continued agricultural use while monitoring water quality. The County has a work-plan that identifies benchmarks and goals for protecting and enhancing critical areas where they intersect with agricultural activity. A mapping exercise was just finished outlining about 65,000 acres of agricultural activities. The five-year monitoring report, which assesses functions and critical areas, is due next summer and the team is currently gathering preliminary data. The State law requires only reporting data at a watershed scale.

In conversations with the County's Water Resources group, we learned that Thurston County has lost the agricultural operation that were the biggest contributors to water quality concerns (i.e., farming operations involving dairy/manure and berries/pesticide).

Nora concluded the presentation by reviewing the services that TCD offers for small forest landowners. These include forest management plans and large-scale riparian restoration.

Phyllis explained the SSWAB was looking to gain information about how agriculture impacts water quality in Thurston County. Ashley commented that if it's not agriculture, the land would be converted into something else, implying that remaining in agricultural use may be better. It is not just looking at what agricultural activities occur now, but also what happens if we lose more agricultural land. Stuart added that water monitoring does not allow us to link concerns to a particular source, nor pin it to a point in time as some elements are more stable than others.

Performance Metrics Update by Staff (Ryan Langan & Stuart Whitford)

Ryan presented the SSWAB's Stormwater Utility Performance Metrics for 2020-2022, reviewing the changes that had occurred over the years.

There were 13 municipal outfalls added. Ryan commented that it was brought to their attention that the County's bridge decks that have small drainage holes which should have been identified as outfalls that resulted in this increase. When bridge deck outfall inspections occur, they look for spills, leaks, and illicit discharges that could runoff off into the surface water.

The deficiencies for the catch basins are higher due to them needing vactoring. On average, 15-20% of the assets inspected get cleaned due to triggering thresholds. There is no trend to this, Ryan noted.

Larry commented that the metric to measure the number of flood-related road closures goal of zero for up to a 10-year event was set based on SSWAB's suggestion. This goal can be reconsidered.

VUE Works is Public Works assets management software system. Currently, three divisions have implemented the software (i.e., Stormwater Utility, Traffic, and Road Operations).

The Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Team primarily targets E. coli in our streams. Stuart added the funding is currently good to support the team. This funding is not grant related, rather comes directly from general fund per direction from the BoCC. The funding allocation is based on an analysis of the different public health services the County needs to provide, then prioritized with the Board of Health.

For all streams, the PIC team tests for E.coli bacteria, temperature, conductivity, nutrients, and total nitrogen and phosphorus. For Black Lake, the main concern is total phosphorus and E. coli discharging from the tributaries.

Stuart explained the ambient monitoring program is currently funded through Stormwater fees; the PIC program is not. SSWAB will review different funding models to see potential impact, possibly presenting a suggestion during the BoCC annual Board briefing in August.

SSWAB Retreat (Jake Wager)

Jake reviewed the proposed SSWAB Retreat details and agenda. Three breakout groups have been identified: Stormwater Planning/Program, Public Outreach/Education, and Capital Projects/Facilities. The breakout groups will be self-selecting. One person from each breakout group will be responsible for wordsmithing the outcome of their breakout discussion. Jake requested a quick turn-around for these reports so that they can be included in the summary and ready for discussion/approval by the SSWAB during the July 20th, 2023 meeting.

Nancy moved to adopt the SSWAB retreat agenda for June 9th, 2023 from 8:15am – 2:30pm. Phyllis second, motion carried.

SSWAB General Discussion (SSWAB Members)

1. General Updates

Nancy briefed the SSWAB on the Conservation Futures Grant. One application was received from the Nisqually Land Trust requesting \$350,000.

2. Updates on Action Items

None.

3. SSWAB Reports on outreach in community

None.

4. Topics for Next Meeting

The Agenda Submittal form was included in the meeting packet. Jake requested that members review and offer agenda item suggestions using the form. He encouraged members to submit ideas as soon as they think of them.

Action Items

- Cynthia will send out a draft of the SPLASH newsletter topics once they start to take shape.
- Email additional ideas for SPLASH to Cynthia.
- Submit meeting agenda items using the submission form as soon as they arise.

The next meeting will be July 20th, 2023.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm