



Lake Whatcom Policy Group

February 4, 2019 Meeting

Brief Digest of Presentations and Discussion

Policy Group members in attendance: Gene Knutson (Bellingham City Council); Todd Donovan (Whatcom County Council); Bruce Ford (Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District Board); Larry Brown (Sudden Valley Community Association). Other Council or Board members present: Todd Citron (Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District).

1. Introductions; Discussion of 2019 Policy Group topics and meeting schedule

The 2019 Policy Group members approved the schedule for 2019 meetings. Meetings will occur at 3:00 PM in the Fireplace Room, 625 Halleck Street, Bellingham.

If additional meetings are needed they can be added over the course of the year. Dates, and topics tentatively scheduled for the remainder of the year, are:

June 24:

- Parcel buildout report
- Sudden Valley report
- Stormwater utility, capital investment program, Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP)
- Lake loading and response model update
- On-Site septic report update
- Tributary Monitoring update

September 30:

- City of Bellingham Lake Whatcom Regulatory Chapter update
- Land acquisition
- Forest practices

November 25:

- Lake Whatcom Management Program 2015-2019 Work Plan Accomplishments Report
- 2020-2024 Work Plan Draft Report
- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) 2019 Report
- Shoreline Master Plan update

Policy Group members requested that a discussion of regulations on vacation rental in the County, in comparison to adopted City rules, be added to a future meeting.

2. Overview of Lake Whatcom Interjurisdictional Coordinating Team (ICT) 2019 Tasks

Staff reviewed tasks expected to be completed in 2019. This is a major reporting year as 2019 marks the end of the 2014-19 Lake Whatcom Management Program Work Plan, and there will be a report prepared summarizing accomplishments over that five year period. Staff will also develop the 2020-2024 Work Plan this year that will need to be approved by the jurisdictions, and is also preparing the 2018 accomplishments report for the Joint Councils and Commissioners meeting. The Institute of Watershed Studies 2018 annual report will also be discussed at the Joint Council meeting.

3. Discussion of Lake Whatcom Annual Joint Councils/Commission Meeting Agenda

Policy Group members and staff discussed the agenda for the annual meeting, which is scheduled for March 27 at 6:30 PM in the City Council Chambers. Dr. Robin Matthews of WWU's Institute for Watershed Studies will be retiring this year. Dr. Matthews has been central in documenting the health of the lake and its watershed for three decades and her work has been instrumental in creating a foundation for policies to improve the lake. Western will hire a replacement for Dr. Matthews, who will stay on long enough to train her successor. Dr. Matthews will not be able to attend the March 27 meeting but will send staff to report this year's results. The group agreed that the importance of Dr. Matthews' work should be noted at the annual meeting.

The tentative annual meeting agenda is:

- Staff open house, 6:00 PM to 6:30 PM
- Meeting convened, 6:30 PM
- Opening remarks from the executives of the three jurisdictions
- Lake Whatcom Annual Monitoring Report
- Lake Whatcom Management Program 2018 Progress Report, and 2019 Activities:
 - Land acquisition and management
 - Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Program
 - Stormwater Management (capital and homeowner programs)
 - Land Use
 - Education and public engagement
 - Recreation
- Report on results of the watershed resident survey
- AIS 2018 annual report
- Public comment

Other items may be added, including a discussion of septic tank issues on the north shore area of the lake. For the watershed annual monitoring report, staff will compile any questions received from policy makers and send them to the Institute for Watershed Studies staff beforehand for response in the presentation. The monitoring report will be distributed in advance of the meeting.

4. Survey of Lake Whatcom Residents - Update

Staff presented a summary of the findings of the survey of watershed residents that was completed in December 2018. The survey concentrated on findings regarding watershed resident knowledge of stewardship practices that help maintain the quality of the lake and its watershed. The survey was designed to be repeatable and will be administered every 5 years. The findings will help tailor outreach to respond to knowledge gaps and resident needs. There were 64 questions, with 5400 surveys distributed and about 600 returned, enough to establish a representative sample that supports statistical analysis. This is a response rate of 11%.

The analysis focused on developing key metrics to understand resident knowledge and concerns, and to track these over time. For some metrics, resident knowledge was quite high. For example, 81% understood that it was good to wash cars at a car wash or on

pervious surfaces that allow runoff to be infiltrated. Other areas with high awareness included proper disposal of dog waste and the need to maintain or increase vegetation on properties. On the other end, people did not understand the need to properly compost or store lawn clippings or how to report illicit discharges, or the benefit of replacing lawns with native vegetation.

One broad finding was that overall attitudes matter. People who did not believe that their actions can make a difference in lake health were also less likely to be aware of proper stewardship responses. Responses of residents who lived in the City and those who lived in the County portions of the watershed were similar, with the exception of transportation. This likely reflected that County residents have fewer practical alternatives for transportation compared to City residents.

The survey results will be used to develop resident guides for living in the watershed and will also inform outreach program development. The survey will be repeated in 2023.

The report of survey findings can be access at:

<http://www.lakewhatcom.whatcomcounty.org/resources>

5. Ordinance Changes to Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Program

Staff have drafted revisions to AIS codes for the City and County that create a new class of boats and implement changes the fee schedule. The City Council passed the ordinance in January and the County Council will begin considering it this month. The ordinance creates a new category of watercraft for "Class B" motorized boats with 10 horsepower or less engines and that are under 16 feet in length. These boats are exempt from state registration but the AIS program had been charging them the same fee as larger boats that present higher risk and take longer to inspect or decontaminate. This intermediate category of boat will be charged \$30. The fee for the largest boats will go up from \$50 to \$60. Non-motorized boats will remain at \$10. It is not known what the net impact on program revenues from this fee change will be.

6. Institute for Watershed Studies Report preview

This item was not discussed as staff have not had a chance to review the draft 2018 monitoring report. Results of the report will be reported at the annual meeting in March.

Upcoming Meetings:

Annual Lake Whatcom Joint Councils and Commission meeting: March 27, 6:30 PM, City Council Chambers, 210 Lottie Street

Lake Whatcom Policy Group: June 24, 3:00 PM, Fireplace Room, 625 Halleck Street, Bellingham