



## Lake Whatcom Policy Group

### June 24, 2019 Meeting

### Brief Digest of Presentations and Discussion

**Policy Group members in attendance:** Todd Donovan, Barry Buchanan (Whatcom County Council); Larry Brown (Sudden Valley Community Association).

#### 1. Stormwater: Updates and Reports

**Capital Investment Projects.** In 2018 the County completed Agate Bay Phase I, and the City completed a stormwater test facility. In 2019, the County is working on the second phase of the Agate Bay project, and the City completed work in the Summit/Hayward/Huntington Street areas.

With completion of 2019 work, the City will have completed treatment for the last three areas in the City limits with outfalls where water goes to the lake or streams without pre-treatment. The City's goal is to treat all 370 acres of developed lands in the City limits. The three projects will treat about 23 acres and remove 13 pounds of phosphorus per year, with a removal rate of 75%, including removal from water coming off of forested areas. Costs are approximately \$550,000, or about \$43,000 per pound of phosphorus removed. The project is funded 75% by the Department of Ecology (DoE) and 25% with City dollars. The treatment technology used is a modular wetland system. Construction will commence in June and will be complete by the end of October. New curbs and drains are also being added in some of the sections.

The County project at Agate Bay will treat 66 acres and remove about 24 pounds of phosphorus per year. Costs are \$550,000 which works out to \$23,000 per pound of phosphorus removed. As with the City, the project is 75% funded by a DoE grant. The project will also remove fecal coliform. The project will include three stormwater treatment vaults and new or replaced storm pipes to reduce maintenance. The project is out to bid and the hope is to award the bid in July. Construction is expected to start in August and finish in September.

**County Stormwater utility.** A Lake Whatcom stormwater utility was created at the end of 2017 and an advisory committee was set up in 2018 to provide a recommendation to the County Council for a fee structure. The structure currently under consideration has three single family residence classes, reflecting properties with small, medium, or large footprints of impervious surfaces. This categorization will be done using data analysis, and properties may be shifted into different categories if owners can demonstrate that properties have less impervious surface than shown in the initial analysis. For non-single family properties, impervious surfaces will be measured. The fee will be revaluated at least once every five years. Fees will be phased in over 2 years. There will also be a capital facilities charge for new construction that creates impervious surfaces. There will be a 35% reduction for properties complying with the County's 2013 Lake Whatcom stormwater control overlay regulations. There will also be an exemption for commercial forest land and for low income senior or disabled households. A Public Hearing is scheduled for July 23. A fee roll will be created in summer and fall of this year and fees will be assessed beginning in 2020.

**Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP).** Over the 2017 and 2018 period, staff have been implementing the revised version of the HIP program. This includes creation of education materials and training of landscaping and design professionals as well as development of do-it-yourself workshops, etc. The new program was first offered in June of 2017. The HIP program remains supported by contracted staff from the Whatcom Conservation District who work directly with homeowners. For 2019 staff are building on prior work and adapting the program to improve its effectiveness.

Similar to 2018, in 2019 there was an advertising blitz including mailings to all eligible property owners, and social media and magazine ads. This advertising has been successful in driving people to the web site where they can learn more about the program and what version of HIP their property qualifies for: the do-it-yourself (DIY) route or the target program route, which includes working with program staff and contractors to design and implement different types of projects. Individuals residing on target properties (creekside, shoreline, or large lawn) are directed to program staff to set up a site visit to learn about their options. DIY program participants are directed to attend a workshop. This year, three DIY workshops involving 38 households were held, 17 target program households have put in site visit requests to learn more about the program, and program staff are working with owners who engaged in prior years. For the last two years, 9 DIY workshops were held with 115 households attending, and about 50 target households completed a site visit. For the DIY program, participants can only submit reimbursement requests for project materials, not for labor. Some of these DIY projects are covering areas of 4,000 to 5,000 SF. Target program projects allow reimbursement for materials plus design and labor and include directing water away from hard surfaces toward treatment or infiltration facilities, such as a rain garden. Lawn may also be replaced with native plants.

**Sudden Valley Projects Update.** Sudden Valley Community Association has continued to work on projects that will help control stormwater runoff. There is a total of \$2.4 million in spending scheduled for this year. \$1.5 million will go for culvert replacement and repair of problem drainage facilities, and \$550,000 will go toward repaving two sections of road. Another \$429,000 was spent repairing a spit at the marina that was leaking soil into the marina. Over the next three years around \$993,000 will be spent for additional road work. Many properties do not flow into treatment facilities and it would be good to have access to HIP for these. County staff indicated that their intent is to extend HIP into Basin Three in coming years, with funding expected to be coming from the new stormwater utility district. All projects in Sudden Valley are currently funded by the neighborhood association.

## 2. Monitoring and Data: Updates and Reports

**On-site septic impact assessment.** In 2016 and 2017 the LWWSO hired a consultant to conduct monitoring of water quality on the north shore of the lake. Results were presented to the Policy Group in July 2018 and indicated that there may be some pollution impact from septic systems along the shore. The district, city, and county are working on an interlocal agreement to further assess impacts and determine how to address them. Fecal coliform was found in the section along the shore where houses are all connected to septic systems. It is unclear whether fecal coliform is also present in sections of the shore connected to sewer systems.

**Loading and response model.** The city's consultant (Hydrocomp) has developed a hydrological model for loading of phosphorus into the lake. A third-party review of the

model recommended additional documentation of the development process. This will occur by the end of this year. The County is working to get a consultant on board by this fall to update the phosphorus loading response model. The Department of Ecology is involved in this review, with the goal of getting a plan for the update to this model in place by March of 2020. A fully revised and recalibrated model will not be available until 2024.

**Tributary monitoring.** Monitoring of streams is also ongoing and we are in year two of a three year cycle with Brown and Caldwell. Six storm events and six baseline events have been studied with 270 total water samples taken. A complete report will be available after 2020. Prior information for such models is available on the Lake Whatcom Management Program web site.

### **3. Recreation: Review of the Management Plan Recreation goal**

Staff are working on the next five year plan and will be updating all the program areas, including recreation. Trails and biking have been talked about a lot in recent years, especially as the County works to develop lands reconveyed from DNR into parks. However, one of the largest recreation activities in the lake is boating. There is a lot of discussion in the community about recreation having a negative impact on the lake. Many people are concerned about traffic to the north side of the lake from the new park land. As lands on the south side get developed, including near Galbraith, with impacts such as traffic and parking, people are wondering if all the recreational uses are compatible with protecting the lake. Also, many areas lack adequate restroom access, including for boaters.

Staff are seeking input from the Policy Group on this issue. Currently the program goal states that the program should promote recreation consistent with maintaining water quality. Some of the recent work has been to retire trails that are not well located and that may result in slide risk. The County is working to maintain roads to stabilize them and prevent slides. The County does not have a promotion campaign to encourage recreation but as the population has grown more and more people are recreating in the area. The County is exploring some solutions to the parking problem on the north side. The trail head at Lookout Mountain has a phosphorus filter so there should be nothing coming off of that. Trails are designed to not create phosphorus runoff into the lake. For properties acquired by the City's watershed acquisition program, the City has been upgrading bridges to eliminate conditions that were causing erosion into the creeks. Some trails will be closed if they cause erosion problems. Other trails get improved.

An option would be to monitor whether things such as increased mountain biking or boating are causing environmental problems. Conversely, some changes to trails may reduce runoff, for example. What about measuring gasoline residue on the lake? This occurred in the past but not recently. The new plan could include some efforts to monitor impacts from recreational activities.

### **4. Aquatic Invasive Species: Update on inspection results to date and threats to the lake**

We are reaching the peak boating season for the year. Changes to the program occurred this year, including adding a new permit type for small vessels and a single day pass option. The number of three-day passes sold have gone down and the one-

day pass is popular. There have been complaints about fee increases. Permit sales are up slightly over a similar period last year. The number of permits is up slightly overall this year over last, as are the number of inspections.

This year the program has completed 60 decontaminations to date, compared to only four for all of 2018. More high-risk boats are coming through, but the good news is that people often provide advanced notice before they arrive, indicating that people are understanding the requirements. A number of boats (around 10%) are coming from waters that are infested. Some boats add ballasts or bladders after being purchased, so it is not always easy to tell when they have these, which creates extra risk.

## **5. Administration: Process for creating the 2020-24 Lake Whatcom Management Program Work Plan**

Staff have been working on the 2020-24 work plan. All sections are being looked at and will get revisions. There are work groups for each of the program areas and another that is working on writing the report and standardizing the writing. Some program areas may be parsed out differently than in the past. A draft is planned for completion by September. The final version would be presented at the annual meeting in March 2020. The report is then used to develop annual work plans.

### **Upcoming Meetings:**

Lake Whatcom Policy Group: September 30, 3:00 PM, Fireplace Room, 625 Halleck Street, Bellingham