



King County

**Metropolitan King County Council
Regional Water Quality Committee**

June 4, 2026

The Honorable Sarah Perry
Chair, King County Council
King County Courthouse
516 3rd Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: 2027 Sewer Rate and Capacity Charge

Dear Chair Perry and King County Councilmembers,

At the May 5, and June 3, 2026, Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) meetings, committee members discussed the Executive's proposed 2027 sewer rate and capacity charge. On behalf of the members of the RWQC, thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed ordinance and for the opportunity to provide comments to help inform your consideration of this important legislation.

As you know, for the last several years, the WTD's sewer rate trajectory has included double-digit increases projected out for the foreseeable future. As a committee, RWQC views these increases from a ratepayer perspective. Our ratepayers are already facing increases across the board in their monthly expenses, including local sewer rates, other utility bills, housing, fuel, and food. Additionally, we recognize that the county's significant wastewater rate increases impact the ability of local sewer utilities to fund their system needs as they are concerned about compounding rate increases to fund both the regional and local system.

Since 2023 RWQC has initiated several legislative efforts to increase transparency and predictability and share information about the factors driving the double-digit rates of growth. Most recently, the RWQC initiated and the Council adopted (Motion 16449) a work plan for the Wastewater Treatment Division to improve engagement, transparency, and accountability. Like previous actions and directives from RWQC in the past few years, this work plan is directed at understanding and controlling the trajectory of large annual County rate increases.

The RWQC acknowledges and appreciates the work that WTD has done thus far to implement the division's work plan for improving engagement and transparency in the rate process. However, many of the action items are still in the early stages of implementation and we continue to see double-digit rate increases each year. Our purpose with this letter is to recommend actions within the next cycle aimed at starting to break this unsustainable cycle:

First: The RWQC submits that the County must establish a multi-year rate as part of the next rate proposal in 2027. Implementing a multi-year rate will improve predictability for local utilities and the ratepaying public.

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Second: Prior to the 2028 rate adoption, we request WTD develop metrics to help inform policy makers of the adequacy, resilience and sustainability of the regional wastewater system. As elected officials, we need to know if the proposed level of investments are resulting in a sustainable system. Over the past few years elected officials have been asked to support rate increases which have included significant increases in capital investments without understanding whether we are at a level of sustaining the regional wastewater system. We have had no metric to understand whether we are at the level of sustaining the system or “kicking the can down the road”.

Third: We strongly encourage a dedicated and coordinated effort to advocate for state and federal support for the types of investments needed to create and maintain a modern, effective and efficient system that will protect the water quality in King County and the central Puget Sound. This also means moving away from costly prescriptive regulations towards a regulatory structure that recognizes actual environmental benefits commensurate with the cost of implementation and reflected in evidence predicted by a biological model approach to Puget Sound.

RWQC values the expert advisory review of the Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC) and looks to MWPAAC to identify policy issues for RWQC and Council consideration. RWQC supports the MWPAAC letter calling for transformational change and concurs with its specific recommendations. In short, we can't keep doing the same thing and expect better results.

Sincerely,

Claudia M. Balducci

Claudia Balducci, Chair
Regional Water Quality Committee

Laura Mork

Laura Mork, Vice Chair
Regional Water Quality Committee

CC: Regional Water Quality Committee Members

King County Councilmembers

April Sanders, Interim Chief Policy Officer, King County Council

Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council

Garrett Holbrook, Council Relations Manager, King County Executive's Office

Melani Hay, Council Clerk, King County Council

Signature: Claudia M. Balducci

[Claudia M. Balducci \(Jun 4, 2026 15:41:17 PDT\)](#)

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[Laura Mork \(Jun 5, 2026 09:29:19 PDT\)](#)

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