

Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) Update Policy Framework Schedule

Presented to the Regional Water Quality Committee

January 7, 2026



RWSP 2026 Budget Proviso:

“WTD shall transmit a plan describing the proposed analysis to be completed for the policy questions identified in the Regional Wastewater Services Plan Update scope document as adopted by regional water quality committee resolution 2025-01”

The plan shall be developed with input from RWQC and will include:

- A **framework** for the analysis of the policy questions which identifies the **topics** that shall be addressed
- A **problem statement** corresponding to each policy question
- **How the policy analysis will inform** the RWSP Update
- **Timelines** for the analysis for each policy question
- Proposed **format** for reporting the analysis
- Plan Due Date: March 1, 2026

RWSP Policy Approach

Framework & Topics for the Analyses: Major policy questions will be analyzed from the following information:

Step 1

- a. Problem Statement
- b. Contextual and baseline information:
 - i. What WTD knows about the topic and current conditions
 - ii. Current policies in Code, contract or in-practice
 - iii. The wastewater system “must-dos”
 - iv. Current and budgeted expenditures
 - v. Summary of science/data if applicable
- c. Example practices from other jurisdictions/industry
- d. Policy issues, challenges and opportunities related to the policy question
- e. **Range of policy options with associated actions** and considerations
- f. Interested and affected parties WTD will engage to gather input

RWSP Policy Approach

Framework & Topics for the Analyses [continued]

Step 2 {

- g. Planning level cost estimates of the options and actions
- h. Evaluation of outcomes – alongside cost estimates identify impacts and outcomes of each option

RWSP Policy Approach

How Analyses will Inform RWSP Update:

Three-step process for RWQC to evaluate and consider the analyses and provide feedback to influence WTD's development of the Draft RWSP Update in the planning and development stages of the work. The Draft RWSP Update will go through a SEPA process in 2027.

Step 3: WTD will integrate RWQC's direction into development of a full range of policy options to include in the **Draft RWSP Update in 2027**.

Step 2: Upon completion of cost estimates (parts g & h), WTD will provide **follow-up analyses** to include costs and evaluation of impacts and outcomes for all options, inclusive of those RWQC expressed desire to see evaluated. Equipped with this additional information **RWQC will have a 2nd opportunity to identify its policy preferences** for WTD.

Step 1: RWQC can share its initial and general direction with WTD during Committee discussion on **parts a-f** of the analysis for a given policy question (*note: this initial discussion would occur before cost estimates of the options are available*).

RWSP Policy Approach

Following the SEPA process for the Draft RWSP Update, WTD will begin to evaluate and consider tradeoffs for a full range of options in consultation with the Executive's Office to develop the “Executive’s Preferred Alternative” RWSP Update in 2028.

This will be followed by transmittal to Council and anticipated referral to RWQC in 2029 for consideration and Council approval.

Outline of RWSP Policy Approach

Timeline of analyses: WTD will cluster each of the policy questions by topic into “Groups” and sequence completion of the analyses and subsequent RWQC briefings in time to ensure a Draft RWSP is produced in 2027.

Policy questions that cover multiple topics: Where relevant WTD will make connections across topics in Step 1 of the analyses and create opportunities for RWQC in Step 2 to holistically evaluate questions and options that cover multiple topics.

Policy Analyses Schedule

Number (of 29)	Major Policy Questions from Scoping Document	Topic	Timeline (RWQC Discussions)
1	Given the uncertainties in future growth rates reported by Washington State and the Puget Sound Regional Council, how aggressively beyond legal requirements should WTD expand capacity to account for future population growth?	Separated System Conveyance (including infiltration/inflow) & Treatment	
2 & 22/23 & 27/28 & 24/25/26	<p>How should I/I be managed and how can costs be <u>fairly apportioned</u>? Should system capacity be expanded to account for increases in <u>I/I</u>? Should I/I policies change to support reducing the capacity needed for <u>I/I</u>?</p> <p><i>Is there a better rate structure for the sewer rate?</i> <i>Will WTD maintain a single uniform sewer rate per residential customer equivalent (Robinswood “one for all, all for one”), or consider alternative cost recovery rate structures to reflect other system impacts?</i></p> <p><i>Relationship to contracts</i></p> <p><i>ESJ (*see note for Group #9 indicating ESJ evaluation will be integrated into each of the analyses for Groups 1 through 8).</i></p>	<p>Separated System Conveyance (including infiltration/inflow) & Finance</p> <p>& Relationship to contracts & ESJ</p>	<p>Group #1</p> <p>Step #1: March 2026 Step #2: Oct 2026 (Tent)</p>
3	How should the conversion of on-site septic systems to sewers in the service area be managed and should WTD implement programs to encourage conversion within the service area?	Separated System Conveyance (including infiltration/inflow)	

Number (of 29)	Major Policy Questions from Scoping Document	Topic	Timeline (RWQC Discussions)
4	What upstream or source control actions should the region undertake to prevent contaminants and reduce costs?	Pollution (Source Control and Legacy)	Group #2
5	How can WTD best support environmental benefits while <u>instituting</u> safeguards to protect against environmental risks of contamination? How should cost considerations be weighed?	Pollution (Source Control and Legacy)	Step #1: April 2026 Step #2: Nov 2026 (tent)
6 & 22/23	<p>How proactive vs. reactive should WTD be when deciding to refurbish or replace aging infrastructure?</p> <p><i>Is there a better rate structure for the sewer rate? Will WTD maintain a single uniform sewer rate per residential customer equivalent (<u>Robinswood</u> “one for all, all for one”), or consider alternative cost recovery rate structures to reflect other system impacts?</i></p>	Asset Renewal and Replacement & Finance	Group #3 Step #1: May 2026 Step #2: Dec 2026 (tent)
7	What level of <u>redundancy of critical systems</u> should WTD have? What level of risk tolerance should WTD accept?	Asset Renewal and Replacement & Climate Impact Preparedness and Natural Disaster Resiliency	

Number (of 29)	Major Policy Questions from Scoping Document	Topic	Timeline (RWQC Discussions)
8	What level of resiliency should WTD <u>plan for</u> regarding seismic and other natural hazards to avoid or minimize risks? What level of risk tolerance should WTD accept? How can these considerations be best informed by the long-term capital motion work in progress?	Climate Impact Preparedness and Natural Disaster Resiliency	<p>Group #4</p> <p>Step #1: June 2026 Step #2: Jan 2027 (tent)</p>
9	Should existing wastewater policy language (KCC 28.86) be revised to specifically call out planning for future climate conditions in addition to population growth and other environmental factors?	Climate Impact Preparedness and Natural Disaster Resiliency	
10	How much should WTD reduce energy use and reduce greenhouse gas emissions?	Climate Impact Preparedness and Natural Disaster Resiliency	
11	How should WTD prepare and adapt to climate impacts (e.g., precipitation/storm intensities, sea level rise, river flooding, etc.) in line with the Strategic Climate Action Plan? What level of climate impact risk tolerance should WTD plan for to avoid or minimize risks to the system?	Climate Impact Preparedness and Natural Disaster Resiliency	
12	How will WTD measure customer affordability for contract agencies and ratepayers?	Finance/Affordability	<p>Group #5</p> <p>July 2026</p>
13	What other rate relief approaches should WTD implement to improve affordability for those who may struggle to pay their sewer bill?	Finance/Affordability	

Number (of 29)	Major Policy Questions from Scoping Document	Topic	Timeline (RWQC Discussions)
14	Should the County evaluate costs and plan for levels of treatment beyond current legal requirements?	Treatment	
1	<i>Given the uncertainties in future growth rates reported by Washington State and the Puget Sound Regional Council, how aggressively beyond legal requirements should WTD expand capacity to account for future population growth?</i>	Treatment	
15	How should the County anticipate, engage with, and plan for future nutrient permit requirements, regulations related to CECs such as PFAS, or other future regulatory changes?	Treatment	<p>Group #6</p> <p>Step #1: August 2026 Step #2: March 2027 (tent)</p>
16 & 22/23	<p>To what extent should WTD prioritize use of existing facility sites vs. acquiring new property to accommodate future treatment needs (including capacity)?</p> <p><i>Is there a better rate structure for the sewer rate? Will WTD maintain a single uniform sewer rate per residential customer equivalent (<u>Robinswood</u> “one for all, all for one”), or consider alternative cost recovery rate structures to reflect other system impacts?</i></p>	<p>Treatment</p> <p>&</p> <p>Finance</p>	
17	Should the region continue to provide a centralized approach for regional wastewater treatment, or should the region move towards a more decentralized approach?	Treatment	

Number (of 29)	Major Policy Questions from Scoping Document	Topic	Timeline (RWQC Discussions)
18	Energy production and heat recovery – Should WTD be expanding its efforts to capture energy and heat? If so, at what level of effort?	Resource Recovery (Biosolids, Energy, Recycled Water)	
19	Biosolids – Should WTD further expand its efforts to develop Class A biosolids? What changes are needed to biosolid recovery policies to get to Class A?	Resource Recovery (Biosolids, Energy, Recycled Water)	
20	Recycled Water – Under what circumstances should the region expand the use of reclaimed water? Which uses (e.g., environmental benefits, groundwater recharge, industrial uses, irrigation) are most appropriate?	Resource Recovery (Biosolids, Energy, Recycled Water)	
5	<i>How can WTD best support environmental benefits while instituting safeguards to protect against environmental risks of contamination? How should cost considerations be weighed?</i>	Resource Recovery (Biosolids, Energy, Recycled Water)	<p>Group #7</p> <p>Step #1: September 2026 Step #2: April 2027 (tent)</p>

Number (of 29)	Major Policy Questions from Scoping Document	Topic	Timeline (RWQC Discussions)
21	Should WTD update the rate structure for the capacity charge to align with current industry standards? (Note: The capacity charge rate structure was updated in 2021. A capacity charge methodology study is in progress.)	Finance/Affordability	Group #8 Q4 2026: Full analysis of the rate structure policy questions 21, 22, 23 (both Capacity Charge and RCE) & March, May, Aug. 2026: WTD will begin to address the rate structure question sequentially where relevant as we move through Policy Question Groups 1, 3, 6. This will allow RWQC members to see how the rate structure issue relates to various topics. Each relevant analysis would include a specific section dedicated to addressing “rate structure considerations” alongside the policy options. e.g. the Group #1 <u>I/I</u> analysis will introduce and begin to address the rate structure question as it relates to the <u>I/I</u> issue.
22	Is there a better rate structure for the sewer rate?	Finance/Affordability (overlap with Groups 1, 3, 6)	
23	Will WTD maintain a single uniform sewer rate per residential customer equivalent (<u>Robinswood</u> “one for all, all for one”), or consider alternative cost recovery rate structures to reflect other system impacts?	Finance/Affordability (overlap with Groups 1, 3, 6)	
			RWQC may choose to form a <u>sub committee</u> focused on the rate structure question and/or WTD may propose a consultant-separate track for this discussion.

Number (of 29)	Major Policy Questions from Scoping Document	Topic	Timeline (RWQC Discussions)
24	What actions should WTD take to increase equity and social justice for the regional wastewater system?	Equity and Social Justice	Group #9 Analyses for these ESJ questions will be integrated into each of the analyses for Groups 1 through 8.
25	How will equity and social justice be interwoven in the update: community engagement, rate structure analysis, etc.?	Equity and Social Justice	
26	How should the regional wastewater system address environmental justice concerns as described in the 2021 Healthy Environmental for All Act, such as addressing the disproportionate environmental health impacts of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities?	Equity and Social Justice	April 2027: A comprehensive ESJ analysis for these questions across all topics/groups will be completed.
27	Are major policy updates aligned with component agency contracts?	Relationship to Contracts	Group #10 Where relevant these questions will be integrated into prior
28	How will WTD implement the RWSP Update consistent with direction and requirements expected of contract agencies?	Relationship to Contracts	
			group analyses (e.g. Group #1 analysis) May/June 2027 (following completion of step #2 for all Groups of questions)
29	How should WTD efforts support the water quality of Puget Sound and applicable inland waterways?	ALL	<u>Applies to all groups</u>

Q & A



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