



King County

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

April 9, 2026

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay
King County Executive
401 5th Ave., Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: 2027 Sewer Rate and Capacity Charge

Dear Executive Zahilay,

At the April 1, 2026 Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) meeting, committee members discussed the 2027 sewer rate and capacity charge you will be transmitting for consideration and adoption by the King County Council. On behalf of the members of the RWQC, thank you for the opportunity to review WTD's rate in development and for the opportunity to provide comments to help inform your recommendation to the Council.

As you know, for the last several years, the sewer rate trajectory has included double-digit increases projected out for the foreseeable future. WTD's presentation at the April RWQC meeting included a department recommendation and alternative scenarios presented which continue this trajectory.

As a committee, RWQC views these increases from a ratepayer perspective. The projected increases significantly affect the affordability of living in our region, and we are deeply concerned the proposed rate trajectory is unsustainable. 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.

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. We are eager to see more progress in the coming months in:

- pursuing state regulatory flexibility with a focus on what matters most for improving water quality

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay

April 9, 2026

Page 2

- implementing a multi-year rate to improve predictability for local utilities and the ratepaying public;
- improving transparency in the capital planning process; and
- advancing the independent review of the capital program, with a goal of ensuring that planned projects are delivered within promised timelines.

In addition, RWQC strongly encourages you 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.

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.

Regarding your upcoming rate proposal, you have a difficult decision to make. We agree with MWPAAC that a forecast of this magnitude warrants an extended review period to allow policymakers and regional partners sufficient time to evaluate alternatives, understand tradeoffs, and reach informed policy decisions.

Sincerely,



Claudia Balducci, Chair
Regional Water Quality Committee



Laura Mork (Apr 10, 2026 11:38:46 PDT)

Laura Mork, Vice Chair
Regional Water Quality Committee

CC: Regional Water Quality Committee Members

Jenny Giambattista

Andy Micklow

Garrett Holbrook

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