



## King County

### **Dow Constantine**

King County Executive

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July 23, 2021

The Honorable Claudia Balducci  
Chair, King County Council  
Room 1200  
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

As called for by Motion 15832, this letter transmits a report documenting the January 13, 2021 wastewater emergency bypass discharges at the West Point Treatment Plant (West Point) and several pump stations. A proposed Motion that would, if enacted, acknowledge receipt of the report, is also included.

A major wind and rainstorm on January 12 and 13, 2021 precipitated power disruptions that led to wastewater discharges from four County facilities. Power interruptions to the wastewater pumps and resulting high wastewater flows caused the emergency bypass gate at West Point to open and divert untreated wastewater directly to Puget Sound. At the pump stations, power disruptions resulted in high flows that quickly exceeded storage capacity and overflowed into Puget Sound and Lake Washington.

As called for Motion 15832, the report describes the causes, consequences, and impacts of those discharges. It includes a summary of all West Point emergency bypass discharge and pump station overflow events since February 2017. The report also provides analysis regarding how the future pattern and frequency of storms can be expected to cause West Point and the pump stations to operate at full capacity or beyond more frequently. Finally, the report details recommendations on strategies to limit or eliminate recurrence of overflows from the regional wastewater system. Some of these strategies have been implemented while others are in progress.

The anticipated increase in storm frequency resulting from climate change will increase the frequency with which the West Point plant operates at maximum capacity. In response, the Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks

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(DNRP) is incorporating data on projected climate change rainfall impacts into wastewater treatment plant and conveyance-system (pipelines that move wastewater) upgrade planning.

The report outlines several strategies that DNRP is implementing to prevent future emergency bypass and overflow events, including electrical upgrades to increase reliability, in accordance with Washington State Department of Ecology Administrative Order 19477 and the County's emergency declaration.

The work described in this report aligns with the King County Strategic Plan goal of a healthy environment by protecting water quality through limiting or eliminating future discharges of untreated wastewater into water bodies. It is also consistent with the Strategic Climate Action Plan goal of preparing for climate change by considering the impacts climate change-related increases in rainfall intensity and storm frequency could have on wastewater treatment facilities.

It is estimated that the report required 400 staff hours to produce, costing approximately \$25,000. The estimated printing cost for this report is nominal.

Thank you for your consideration of this report and the Proposed Motion. The important work described in the report will better protect water quality, human health and safety, and the natural environment.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Kamuron Gurol, Division Director, Wastewater Treatment Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, at 206-263-5767.

Sincerely,

 for  
Dow Constantine  
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers  
    ATTN: Janine Weihe, Interim Chief of Staff  
        Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council  
Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive  
Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive  
Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget  
Christie True, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP)  
Kamuron Gurol, Division Director, Wastewater Treatment Division, DNRP