



Legislation Text

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Clerk 01/21/2021

A MOTION requiring a report on the January 13, 2021, discharge of untreated wastewater into Puget Sound from the West Point Treatment Plant and several pump stations.

WHEREAS, on the morning of January 13, 2021, the King County West Point Treatment Plant discharged eleven million gallons of untreated wastewater into Puget Sound, and

WHEREAS, the discharge was directed through the emergency bypass system of the plant, during a heavy rainstorm that featured high winds and voltage fluctuations in the plant's power feed, and

WHEREAS, the discharge, while it did not result in plant flooding or injury to employees, nevertheless presented significant impacts to the marine environment and required the closure of public beaches at area parks, and

WHEREAS, in addition to the West Point Treatment Plant discharge, there were several other discharge events at pump stations located at various points along system conveyance lines, including the East Pine, Medina and Richmond Beach pump stations, resulting in additional overflows amounting to the spillage of 2.4 million gallons of untreated wastewater into local water bodies, and

WHEREAS, as much as 2.2 million gallons of wastewater overflowed into Lake Washington from the East Pine Pump Station resulting from a power outage. The flow volume on the night of the storm also overwhelmed the pumping capacity at the Medina Pump Station, resulting in a spill of 100,000 gallons of wastewater into Lake Washington, and at the Richmond Beach pump station, which spilled 165,000 gallons of wastewater into Puget Sound, and

WHEREAS, other jurisdictions with waterfront bordering central Puget Sound also closed beaches and took actions to limit public access, and

WHEREAS, absent corrective action, there is no reason to expect that coming operational periods will witness any mitigation of the contributing factors to the discharges, such as heavy rainstorms, accompanied by high winds, and fluctuations in power feeds, and

WHEREAS, untreated wastewater contains human and pet sewage, pretreated industrial toxics and contaminants of emerging concern and stormwater runoff, and

WHEREAS, there is increasing evidence that Puget Sound marine life is facing challenges to their viability that may be due, in part, to these elements of untreated wastewater discharges, and

WHEREAS, King County has invested billions of dollars in building systems to avoid discharging untreated effluents into Puget Sound and Lake Washington, and

WHEREAS, such discharges are inconsistent with permit requirements under which county treatment plants are operated;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The executive be directed to prepare a report that documents:

1. The causes of the discharge of untreated wastewater from the West Point Treatment Plant, and overflows at the Richmond Beach, Medina and East Pine pump stations on the morning of January 13, 2021;
2. The consequences of the discharges to the Puget Sound and Lake Washington ecosystems;
3. The potential impact to water-adjacent landowners and visitors to water-adjacent facilities;
4. The potential impacts to those utilizing the fishery and shellfish resources;
5. A summary of emergency bypass discharges at the West Point Treatment Plant and pump station overflows since February 2017, including causes, volumes and responses; and
6. The recent and projected future pattern and frequency of storms of a magnitude that can be expected to generate wastewater volumes that exceed the stated processing capacity of the West Point

Treatment Plant and system pump stations.

B. The report shall also recommend a strategy to limit or eliminate recurrence of the January 13 discharges and overflows of untreated wastewater, and shall provide cost estimates associated with such a strategy and make suggestions on how a partnership with the King County Flood Control District might help improve these facilities.

C. The executive should electronically file the report, together with a motion that acknowledges receipt of the report no later than August 1, 2021, with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff and the lead staff for the regional water quality committee, or its successor.