

2021 Seattle City Council Statement of Legislative Intent

Council Budget Action: Agenda

Tab	Action	Option	Version
SPU	001	A	001

Budget Action Title: Request SPU to prepare a scope of work to analyze wastewater treatment plans and potential governance structure changes

Ongoing: No Has Attachment: No

Primary Sponsor: Alex Pedersen

Council Members: Lisa Herbold, Andrew Lewis

Staff Analyst: Brian Goodnight

Date		Total	LH	TM	KS	AP	DJ	DS	AL	TM	LG
	Yes	0									
	No	0									
	Abstain	0									
	Absent	0									

Statement of Legislative Intent:

The purpose of this Statement of Legislative Intent is to have Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) begin an effort to evaluate and analyze the regional wastewater treatment system that serves the City of Seattle, including its operations, improvement plans, and governance structure.

The Council desires to keep utility rates as affordable as possible and recognizes that higher rates can have a disproportionate impact on lower-income residents. At the end of the evaluation process, the Council hopes to receive recommendations from SPU for improving environmental quality and maximizing ratepayer value.

The Council requests that SPU provide a report to the Council by June 30, 2021 with a proposed scope of work, approach, and evaluation of whether the work can be done within SPU's 2021 Adopted Budget (or, if applicable, what additional funding would be needed and by when) for conducting an evaluation of the recommendations of King County's Clean Water Plan and analyzing alternative approaches for treating the City's wastewater. At a minimum, the scope of work should address the following:

- An exploration of alternatives, including governance changes, to accomplish the goals of the Clean Water Plan.
- A third-party assessment of King County's planning approach and technical work performed as the basis for the recommendations proposed in the Clean Water Plan.
- An assessment of the impact of Clean Water Plan recommendations on historically disadvantaged communities that have borne disproportionate environmental and social impacts.
- The development and analysis of alternative approaches to wastewater treatment, such as innovative technologies and distributed approaches that support resiliency, that have not been thoroughly analyzed in the Clean Water Plan. SPU should emphasize the development of alternatives that have the potential to achieve greater environmental and equity outcomes with similar or lower costs.

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- An identification and analysis of the feasibility, costs, and benefits of governance changes to the ownership and management of the King County regional wastewater system, including the potential separation of the West Point service area from the regional system.

BACKGROUND

King County provides wastewater treatment services for 34 jurisdictions, 17 cities and 17 local sewer utilities, in King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties. As one of these jurisdictions, the City of Seattle owns and operates its own collection system that carries wastewater and stormwater flows to the County's regional system for treatment and disposal.

The City has a long-term agreement with the County for this service, with the current contract in effect until July 2036. To pay for this wastewater treatment service, the County charges the City a treatment rate that is based on the County's monthly rate and the number of customers that the City serves. To recoup these costs, the City factors the cost of treatment into the rates that are charged to its utility customers, or ratepayers.

The County is currently developing a Clean Water Plan to guide its future water quality investments through the year 2060. The Plan will amend King County's Regional Wastewater Services Plan, which has been guiding the operation and development of its wastewater infrastructure and activities since 1999.

The County anticipates publishing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for its Clean Water Plan in 2021 for public review and comment, and the Clean Water Plan will be published for County Council review in Q4 2021.

Responsible Council Committee(s):

Transportation & Utilities

Date Due to Council:

June 30, 2021