

Meeting: Engineering and Planning Subcommittee

Date: January 21, 2009

Attendees: Bob Elwell, City of Auburn; Wes Jorgenson, City of Bellevue; Joyce Nichols; City of Bellevue; Scott Thomasson, City of Redmond; Paul Sentena; NE Sammamish Sewer and Water District; Laura Szentes, NE Sammamish Sewer and Water District; Margaret Wiggins, Northshore Utility District; Arne Lind, Ronald Wastewater District; Art Wadekamper, Ronald Wastewater District; Ron Little, Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District; Mary Shustov, Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District; Dave Christensen, City of Renton; Mark Buscher, King County; Debra Ross, King County; Steve Tolzman, King County; Laura Wharton, King County; Tamie Kellogg, Facilitator

I. Committee Business:

- A letter of recommendation on the West Point permit renewal will be drafted by E&P for vote recommendation at MWPAAC on January 28. If approved, the letter will be sent to the Department of Ecology.
- The chair would like to encourage agencies to submit comments to Ecology, recommending that King County should continue to use best practices in operating and maintaining facilities and Ecology should wait for the science to indicate what changes are needed before financial resources are allocated so that those resources are spent wisely.

II. West Point Permit Renewal

- Pam Elardo, Manager of West Point Plant, gave a presentation on the changes for the West Point Treatment Plant NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) permit. The Department of Ecology has proposed new requirements for the West Point permit and has extended the public comment period on the proposed permit through February 13. The new or updated provisions in the proposed permits are:
 - Requires improvements to the West Point disinfection system;
 - Sets more stringent limits on fecal coliform bacteria and chlorine on the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) discharges;
 - Adds pH limits for CSO treatment plant discharges;
 - Requires increased monitoring of contaminants, nutrients, from discharge;
 - Requires an additional study of contaminants in 3 industrial discharge categories;
 - Adds additional sampling requirements for Appendix A, the list of chemicals to be sampled for in the effluent;
 - Increases frequency of CSO reporting (all facilities in terms of volume and duration); and
 - Requires compilation in a report all the sediment data around CSOs.
- In response to a question about new monitoring listed in Appendix A, Pam answered that these standards are being applied throughout the State. The additional sampling requirements in Appendix A are being applied first to King County and then to the rest of the State.
- A question was asked about how big of a challenge will achieving the fecal coliform requirements be for the CSO Treatment facilities? Pam answered it will

involve programming the system for dosing/keeping the chlorine balanced and that is the challenge. Elliott West's requirement is very low, and there have been some operational difficulties so that facility will present additional challenges.

- A question was asked if additional monitoring is required, would they be able to identify whose contaminants they are? Pam answered that the State has a toxic clean-up program; the requirement in this permit is part of Ecology's pre-site investigation. To the extent that we are asked to do any extra monitoring we would look at that requirement closely and if it is addressing data gaps, it is not really a problem as long as the public is educated about what it means.
- A question was raised if the County was going to challenge the additional permit requirements. Pam answered that the final permit is a process of negotiation. KC had reviewed an initial draft and requested some changes. KC plans to make some additional comments on some requirements such as how the permit describes filling in the sediment data gap. However, after the final permit is issued, if the County feels that some requirements are too onerous, we could appeal the permit.
- People for Puget Sound's perspective on the proposed permit:
 - Nutrient removal should be planned or required. (Potentially the most costly recommendation in terms of monitoring, modeling, and increased operating costs.)
 - Source tracing of toxics, mixing zones. If the non-point and point sources are identified, what are the next steps to take care of them? The County is assisting in several Ecology studies, as a member of the technical committee on the South Sound DO Study and the Puget Sound-wide DO modeling study. Member mentioned legislation is being proposed for the manufacturers of chemicals to take back their products and staff confirmed KC supports the legislation.
 - Address endocrine-disrupting chemicals. The County currently has a public education program but additional information would be gathered.
 - Address bioaccumulation/biomagnifications and endocrine-disrupting chemicals. It is premature to do such studies, and feasibility is an issue.
 - Increase reclaimed water use (in order to reduce the amount of effluent discharge).
- A question was asked if MBR technology would be used to comply with any additional nutrient removal. Pam replied that MBR is only one technology that removes nutrients and costs vary. The plants currently remove 100 million tons of nitrogen through biosolids. There are ways to set-up to get nitrogen to come off as a gas. It would take up treatment capacity itself. The effects of adding nutrient removal to any plant will be receiving-water specific in terms of removing nutrients but if we don't know that nutrients are causing the problem, what would be the sense of spending that money?
- Member asked if the position that the County is taking is waiting for science to tell us what the appropriate action is. Pam answered, yes.
- Several members commented that we should wait for the science to indicate what changes are needed before financial resources are allocated.

- A comment was made that the County's treatment plants operate an efficient and effective treatment program.
- Pam explained that mixing zones are a limited area near the outfall where you don't have to meet water quality standards. People for Puget Sound (PPS) has stated they think there should not be mixing zones for toxic chemicals.
- Pam replied to a question, that Ecology is proposing in this Draft permit, more stringent and specific monitoring but PPS is requiring more.
- The County will speak at the hearing on what current efforts are underway at West Point and what is working well. If there are requirements in the final permit that we cannot live with then the County will appeal and negotiate them with Ecology.
- A member commented that there is still a lot of effort that will have to go into determining what the appropriate environmental response is to Puget Sound discharges. Science doesn't have the answer at this point.

IV. Reclaimed Water Comprehensive Plan Update:

- The documented reclaimed water problem statement is still being drafted.
- Comments on the evaluation criteria and planning process are still being received and reviewed.
- The committee reviewed the summary of input received to date.
- A question was raised, what does the County do with the comments received? Mark answered that the comments will help to identify a problem statement; identify alternatives to reclaimed water; develop the objectives of the plan and the criteria used to meet those objectives. It will be a deliberative process to come up with a range of evaluation criteria that is realistic and will cover both utility-related concerns as well as water resource-related concerns.
- Several comments were raised that the development of a problem statement should have begun earlier in the planning process.
- Next steps are to move forward on the development of background information; develop potential facility configurations based on volume estimates and seasonality. The facility configurations to be evaluated in the Plan will be decentralized and centralized. In order to develop the configurations, potential uses for reclaimed water need to be identified based on input from local agencies and other interested groups. This will provide a better understanding for us of the potential uses for reclaimed water. We are being very clear as to what we mean by potential uses. By identifying a use, we assume that the local agency is not making any commitment about the future use of reclaimed water within a particular area.
- The City of Seattle is conducting an independent study of reclaimed water off the west leg of Brightwater to verify potential reclaimed water uses.
- In response to a question on whether certain information can be obtained, Mark answered that information requested regarding customers' water consumption is not required. Water consumption can be verified through other means such as documented agronomic rates for irrigation.

- A suggestion was made that the Planning Team should meet with the economic (redevelopment) department of local agencies to discuss potential reclaimed water uses.

Storm Response:

- During the January 7-8, 2009 storm, the Olympic rain shadow caused less rain to fall in the Seattle to Everett corridor and because of that the Seattle metropolitan area escaped the brunt of the storm.
- WTD met all permit requirements. A debriefing has been scheduled to allow staff to analyze the event and see what could have done better.
- A question was asked if other facilities near rivers were affected by the storm, Janice responded that she had not heard yet.
- In response to a question on the storm classification, Janice answered that it has not been classified yet but was in line with a normal storm.
- Renton asked to be included in discussions regarding the set point for the influent level at South Treatment Plant. It has been working well, but they would like to be included in future discussions.