

Why is Brightwater needed?

About the project

The \$1.8 billion Brightwater Treatment System project is the largest expansion of our regional treatment system in 50 years, and probably the most complex major capital project King County has ever undertaken.

Brightwater will provide the wastewater treatment capacity needed to protect public health, the environment and our quality of life for our growing population over the next several decades.

Protecting public health, the environment and the economy

The decision to build Brightwater in 1999 came out of an eight-year planning effort to determine the best ways to expand capacity in our system for the coming decades. Many options were evaluated in the Regional Wastewater Services Plan, or RWSP, that was adopted by the King County Council in 1999.

The RWSP identified the need for Brightwater as well as dozens of other major capital improvement projects to ensure our system would be able to protect public health and the environment and to sustain economic development for our growing population.

A four-year siting process that involved thousands of meetings with the public, elected officials, and various stakeholder groups evaluated many options and locations for the plant and conveyance facilities culminated with a final decision by King County Executive Ron Sims in December 2003 to build Brightwater at its current location.

Population projections demonstrate need

Population projections are developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council and used by governments and utilities throughout the region to do long-range planning. King County review new estimates when they are updated. In addition to growth in the general population, we need to plan for new wastewater customers as households currently on septic systems hook up to the sewer system. Wastewater facilities are planned for the long term. Historically, short-term changes in the local economy such as the Boeing bust in the '70s and a recession in California in the early '90s followed by the technology boom have had little impact on the long-term growth projections.

Brightwater was built to serve planned growth

The plant will serve about 189,000 people in north King and south Snohomish County, including an estimated 154,000 that live and/or work in Snohomish County.

King County plans and builds its facilities to serve projected growth within the urban growth area, consistent with the Growth Management Act. Brightwater was built to serve planned growth inside the existing sewer service area.

Decisions about where and when to extend the sewer service area are made by local jurisdictions and wastewater utilities, not King County. Our capacity needs are carefully planned and Brightwater was built to serve projected growth in the north portion of the service area.

Why is Brightwater needed?

People with questions or concerns about sewer expansion in their community should call their local sewer/water utility

Running out of capacity – preserving the capacity we have

Initially, the first place we will run out of capacity is in our conveyance pipelines at the north end of Lake Washington, which could lead to sewage overflows in that area. Additional capacity in the north portion of our service area will preserve capacity in our existing facilities. Under current comprehensive plans, South Plant in Renton is scheduled for expansion in 2029.

Water conservation is important for a lot of reasons, but it does little to reduce the need for wastewater systems, which are sized for wet weather conditions when water conservation has the least impact. Water conservation does nothing to reduce the amount of solids that we need to treat.

Who pays for Brightwater?

Brightwater is projected to be paid for by the rates and capacity charges levied to newly connecting customers within throughout the regional service area, not just the area Brightwater will serve.

Getting the most for our money

The current estimate for the cost of the preferred Brightwater system is \$1.8 billion. Growth will pay for growth — most of the cost will come from the rates and hook-up fees paid by new customers to the system. Current ratepayers will see modest rate impacts over the long term.

For more information or to be added to our mailing list, please contact the Brightwater project team at: 206-263-9453 or email brightwater@kingcounty.gov

Visit the project web site at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/brightwater/>

This information is available in alternative formats upon request by calling

206-684-1280 or Relay Service 711