



COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS – SUMMARY

Updated June 4, 2019

Overview

The clean water services provided by King County have protected water quality, public health, and our environment for decades. We are now working on a wastewater comprehensive plan that will guide the County's work for decades to come. This plan will be a chance to have a regional discussion about our wastewater system and protecting our local waterways and health in the future.

The King County Clean Water Plan development process will be supported by a regional, community-based public outreach and engagement effort. This outreach will launch in 2019 and will continue across the area for several years. During this time, the project's Regional Engagement team will engage in dialogue with the community, leading with race, equity, and social justice, and seeking to equitably involve groups and individuals with diverse experiences, opinions and priorities.

To help achieve this, the team conducted community interviews in early 2019. Feedback and common themes from these interviews will inform the Regional Engagement Plan at large, provide a foundation from which to tailor engagement and messaging as we move forward, and provide important information about community priorities to the Planning Team.

Information about the Clean Water Plan is available at: www.kingcounty.gov/cleanwaterplan.

Community Interview Goals

- Introduce the planning effort and emphasize the need for community input to help prioritize future investments.
- Identify potential interested parties and the ways they want to participate.
- Better understand how to effectively inform, involve, and collaborate with communities that don't typically participate in County outreach activities.
- Test our project key messaging, strategy, and tactics, and revise it so it resonates with the community. Explain why we think these community members should care about participating in this process and how they would benefit from it.
- Understand specific barriers to participation—including racial, linguistic, socio-economic, and geographic—and power dynamics among diverse communities in King County.
- Identify community values, needs, priorities, and concerns that will help develop scenarios.

Approach

The Clean Water Plan Regional Engagement team includes King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD), Ross Strategic, Stepherson & Associates Communications (S&A), Environmental Coalition of South Seattle (ECOSS), and Resource Media.

Team members contacted potential interview participants via an approved introductory email. Prior to each interview, the project team members also provided information to participants about the planning process (fact sheet and link to webpage) and a copy of the questions we would ask.

Interviews were conducted over the phone or in person and ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length.

Interview Participants

The Regional Engagement Team sought diverse organizations that represent many different communities and issues across the WTD service area. The team reached out to 33 organizations in the Puget Sound region and WTD service area that included public agencies, economic development groups, community-based organizations, nonprofits, and environmental advocacy organizations.

Twenty-four organizations participated in the first round of interviews. Participants (listed below) represented a significant number of equity and social justice-focused organizations as well as youth development organizations, high school students, public agencies, Native people, and environmental coalitions.

- Asian Counseling and Referral Services (ACRS)
- Award-winning writer and visual artist
- Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC)
- Craft3
- Disability Rights Washington
- Economic Alliance of Snohomish County
- Indigenous Resistance Alliance
- InterIm CDA
- King County WTD High School Career Fair Participants
- Mazaska Talks
- OneAmerica
- Port of Seattle
- Puget Sound Partnership
- Puget Sound Sage
- Seattle 2030 District
- Seattle Indian Health Board
- Seattle Youth Climate Action Network
- Solid Ground
- The Russell Family Foundation
- Tlingit & Haida Washington Youth
- Tribal Resistance

- White Center CDA
- YMCA Earth Services Corps

Key Findings

Participants were generally eager to talk to our team about what they do and who they serve, as well as discuss the Clean Water Plan, critical issues around climate change, and how we can connect to their existing programs and initiatives.

Key issues and topics organizations are focusing on currently and in the coming years include affordable housing, climate change and justice, youth engagement, displacement in King and Snohomish counties, and transportation.

Reflecting on the key issues within the Clean Water Plan, participants named climate change and justice, equitable distribution of benefits and impacts, and public health protections as the most important.

Participants also noted topics such as small business support, water rights and proper stewardship on tribal lands, storm readiness, and intergovernmental collaboration as important to address in the Clean Water Plan.

Participants emphasized that a successful Clean Water Plan would be measured by accessible and equitable outreach, engagement with tribal communities, protecting public health, and ensuring water quality.

Almost all participants were interested in learning more about our outreach and planning efforts and look forward to identifying specific ways we can serve and engage their communities.

Interview Questions

See the appendix for the full set of interview questions and script.

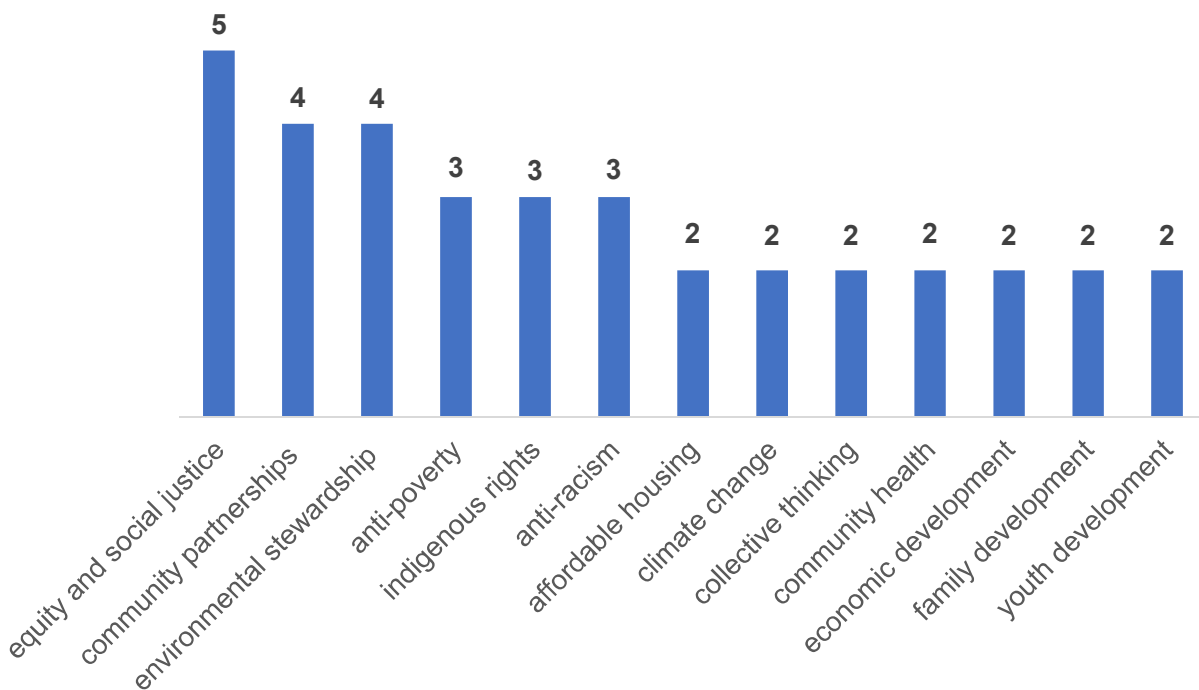
Summary of Feedback

Question 1: Getting to Know You

What are the most important principles or priorities that guide your organization's work and decision making?

Participants listed about 30 different principles or priorities. The most common are noted in the chart below. Other principles and priorities mentioned included accessibility, effective use of resources, spirituality, sustainability, clean water, and transparency.

Figure 1. Organizations' Top Principles and Priorities

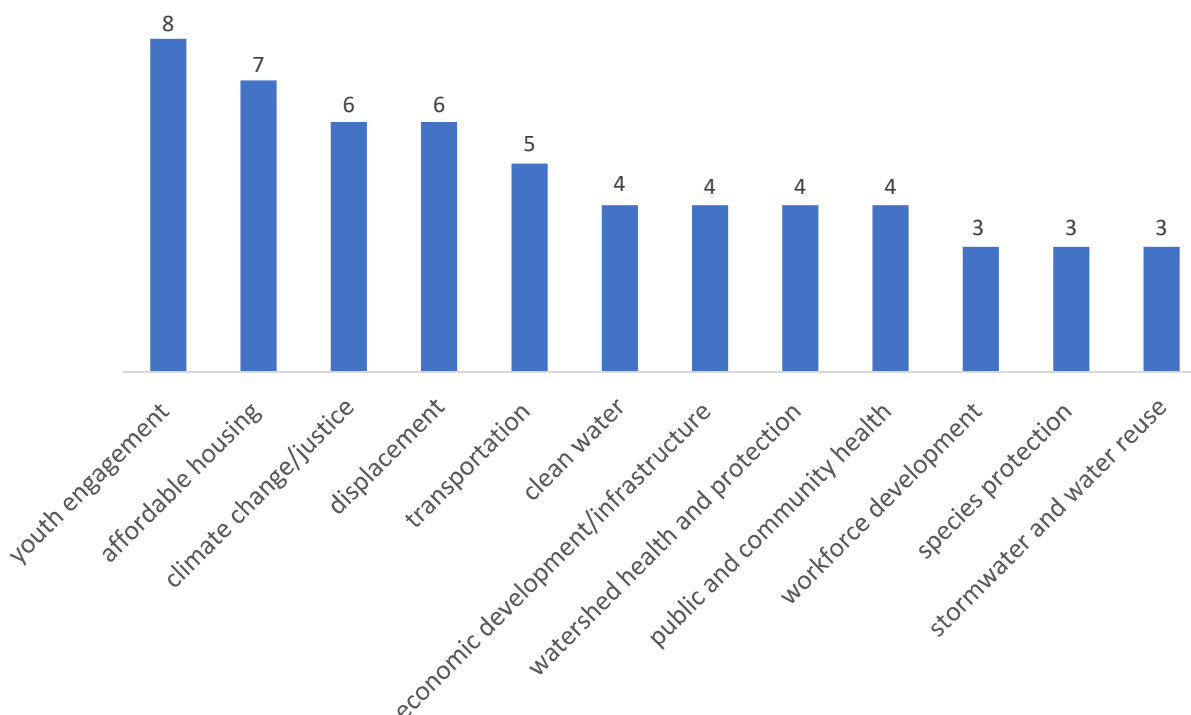


What are the most important issues your organization and community will focus on in the next few years?

Participants listed about 33 different issue areas or specific topics they are addressing in the coming years. The most common issues are noted in the chart below.

Youth engagement issues included engagement specifically with native and indigenous youth and their communities. Transportation issues included large-scale infrastructure investment as well as investment in mass transit and improvement in accessibility and para-transit services. Public and community health included public health governance, community health programs, and focus on behavioral health, as well as improving health services and outcomes for Native people. Species protections focused largely on orca whales and salmon.

Figure 2. Top Issues



Other topics: Other important topics mentioned included fishing, refugee and immigrant rights, corporate divestment in tar sands, indigenous arts and culture, public safety, civic engagement, family basic needs, and living wages.

What are some notable opportunities or challenges you see for your organization in the coming years?

In general, many respondents see opportunities in future advocacy, advancing community efforts, and more public attention to equity issues. Challenges mentioned by participants varied quite a bit, however, ranging from lack of resources to large corporate accountability.

Opportunities

- Building movements that advance community efforts
- Creating job pipeline and youth leadership platform
- Direct youth advocacy
- Equity on open space
- Further expanding our reach and making sure other organizations are connected to students
- Green movement
- Increased capacity to conduct advocacy
- Increased funding opportunities
- More funding to get out into the community for cultural festivals
- Stormwater credit program
- The public is finally paying more attention to equity and allowing more participation by people of color
- Upcoming 2020 election and census

Challenges

- Limited human resources
- Lack of physical office space
- Current U.S. administration: changes to rules and access to benefits
- Different immigrants carry different values, making it hard to collectively organize
- Reaching non-English speakers who may not have internet
- Displacement and homelessness
- Mobility and access to youth programs
- Gentrification
- Wells Fargo financial relationship with tribes
- People's reluctance to pay for improvements where the problems exist
- Amazon accountability
- Maintaining competitiveness for future Boeing airplane

Question 2: Familiarity with the County

How have you or your organization interacted with the County in the past? Or if no interaction, in what context have you heard of it?

- Most participants have interacted with King County before or have an awareness of WTD. Approximately two participants indicated that they don't know much about the county.
- Many participants noted other county programs, projects, or divisions that they've worked with in the past or with which they are currently working. Some examples include: King County Public Health, Housing Office, Elections Office, Behavioral Health, and Housing Authority.
- The most common ways that participants interact with King County are through grant programs and through participation in panels, advisory groups, speaking events, or participatory budgeting processes.
- Two participants coordinate with King County on a government-to-government level.
- Among these responses, the commonly repeated term was "partnership" or "relationship." Some people indicated they have a "strong relationship," "long relationship" and "long history working successfully together." "Partner" and "partnerships" were words used several times (approximately six times).

Is there anything you think the County could do that would better serve your community?

We saw three themes arise from participant answers: 1) Make it easier to work with the county on projects and grants; 2) Maintain or build relationships among the county, community, and other agencies; and 3) Make sure engagement and outreach are coordinated through community-based organizations (CBOs) using culturally appropriate tools and compensation. Further details are outlined in the chart on Page 10.

We also heard that it is of paramount importance to maintain working relationships with tribes and regional organizations serving Native people throughout the regional engagement and technical planning process.

Key Themes	Tactics
Make it easier to work with King County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be transparent and fair on projects and contracts.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide fewer bureaucratic systems so community organizations can more easily access information.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish easier grant reporting requirements.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish policies that benefit refugees, immigrants, and low-income populations.
Build or maintain relationships with community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and communicate engagement activities among various county agencies.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better serve Snohomish and the region by having some bi-regional meetings in Snohomish County.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain community connections and relationships when there is personnel turnover within the county.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more relationships between community organizations and King County so it's easier to see how decisions are made.
Engagement and outreach: Collaborate with CBOs and be culturally relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with local CBOs for effective community engagement and outreach and reach out to communities earlier in the process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure requests to underrepresented communities for input are made with respect for their labor and time.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be more open to meeting teens where they are during the week, including at existing school programs. Younger people also love surveys.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When conducting language translation, use intermediaries such as CBOs, and attend community meetings to introduce the project. Develop culturally relevant, in-language materials.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives for participation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire from within our communities and specifically hire those who grew up here.

Other ideas, outside of WTD's likely scope, included:

- Lower rent
- Provide scholarship funds for kids in kindergarten through 12th grade
- Improve paratransit access and engage the people who use it to see how well it's working

Question 3: How we can effectively work with you during planning?

What is the best way to share information with your community? In what ways have you communicated to your community thus far? Do you have any examples of good or bad engagement that you've experienced? Why?

Suggested ways to share information included:

- Environmental groups in Snohomish County
- For business community, show successful case studies
- Email, social media, and newsletters
- Newsletter services for schools and PTAs
- Word of mouth
- Slack app
- Flyers in libraries
- Community-based organizations
- One-on-one interactions and in-person outreach
- Youth organizations focused on environmental justice

An example of good outreach included relating the problem to how it affects Puget Sound, our businesses, health, or people. When describing the Clean Water Plan, show what the old system looked like and how planning and changes over time have helped solve problems. Also, demonstrate how youth contributions can lead to change.

Other examples of good outreach included:

- Allow time to build authentic relationships.
- Talk to Green Teams at high schools or speak to other clubs.
- Provide guest speakers to schools.
- Field trips for young people to treatment plants.
- Share how the Clean Water Plan is part of job readiness.
- Use social media.
- Provide food.
- Tour of treatment plants.
- Email – let young people know if their ideas were used or not and, if ideas would not work, explain why or call them directly.
- Offer job shadows.
- Do a short two-minute music video that explains the plan.
- Interpretive dance to explain plan.
- Some students have worked with younger students on programs that teach students how to survive high school – model that.
- Develop youth ambassadors.
- Offer community service programs (e.g., restoration).

We received several examples of what is viewed as bad engagement, including:

- Not using native languages
- Providing translations *after* English materials
- Not compensating people for their time
- Not promoting activities or information enough
- Not providing the appropriate staff member to a cultural or community event
- Not including all information in final reports
- Not doing any outreach at all

Are there any programs or events we should coordinate with?

Interview participants recommended several organizations and individuals, including environmental organizations, community-based organizations, and academic interests.

Are there strengths within your community or organization our team can leverage to make this a successful engagement process?

- Relationships within communities and cross-coordination efforts
- Translation/interpretation/transcreation help
- Interpretation equipment
- Articles in organizations' newspapers
- Arrange opportunities to speak to students
- Existing funder listserv
- Access to tribes
- Serve as a conduit to the private industry

Are there any barriers, cultural or otherwise, that your community has in engaging with public projects?

- Language
- Accessibility issues, particularly for elderly people (recommend always using microphone and a hearing loop system)
- Interpretation equipment does not work perfectly
- Transportation access
- Daytime meetings are a barrier. Time and location of public events should be flexible.
- Federally recognized versus unrecognized tribes
- Public information can be too technical (co-creation of materials was suggested)
- People work non-typical shifts
- People do not have background of civic engagement and lack understanding of the process
- Financial and socio-economic barriers to participation
- Racial segregation
- Institutional racism
- Bureaucracy
- Lack of compensation for people's time

- Engagement and participation take time and resources to reach all populations
- It can be difficult to get CBOs to engage

Question 4: Engagement Partnerships

Would your organization be interested in learning more about engagement partnership opportunities?

About half of the participants responded with a strong “yes.” The remaining participants were somewhat interested but need further details or understanding of what is expected.

Question 5: A Plan that Works for you

Does this plan development interest your community? Why or why not? What drives you to participate?

Most participants replied that the plan does interest them, their organization, or the people with whom they work. Some mentioned the plan is of interest, specifically in terms of:

- Utility charges, bills, and ensuring inclusion of low-income community voices
- Building codes, zoning policies, construction
- Grantees focused on water and the communities that live around it
- The plan directly impacts their clients’ daily lives
- Future generations and their safety

Regarding what drives people to participate, a recurring response was that our outreach efforts need to convey, in an easy-to-understand way, how the Clean Water Plan affects people directly, so that people know how it may impact their cost of living, quality of life and future in the Puget Sound region. Other key recommendations include:

- Some people may be afraid to ask questions or participate in larger venues. Smaller listening sessions or visioning discussions are helpful.
- Reach out to youth and teens through their existing high school programs.
- Implement multi-use opportunities for land King County owns or community ownership programs.
- Implement land use strategies/multi-use strategies/development of international markets.
- Create jobs/employment opportunities/labor agreements/pre-apprenticeship opportunities for immigrant/refugee communities and those who are multilingual.

How can this plan development process help you and your community or tie into your work?

Several participants emphasized this plan ties into their work or holds relevance because clean water is connected to daily lives, community health, and that protection of water is key. The region's future related to climate change, sea level rise, and flooding of low-lying communities was relevant to one person.

A handful of participants responded that the plan development relates to their work because they help bridge knowledge, engage communities, and connect nonprofits on programs or projects like this one. Lastly, one participant reflected that when tribes can engage in the process early on, they're able to steer things in a better and healthier way for all participants.

What communications resources (or other resources) would help you be more successful in your mission and reaching your community members?

The most common response was that transparency in County decisions and simple public information are needed. Things that are helpful include:

- Public-friendly executive summaries
- Culturally appropriate education materials
- Non-digital engagement tactics
- Properly translated and simplified materials; no technical jargon
- Newspaper and radio (have a lot of impact)
- Physical face-to-face connections to empower community to raise our voices

Two others reflected on the need to ensure outreach is authentic and incorporates the Equity and Social Justice Initiative into plan development. One person suggested that we should bring in the Snoqualmie and Muckleshoot tribes to ensure their voices are heard. Lastly, one participant reflected that more funding and partnerships are always needed.

Some issues we are considering in this Plan are:

- **Aging pipes and treatment plants**
- **More people in the region creating more wastewater**
- **The changing climate**
- **Potential new requirements**
- **Recovering resources from wastewater (like energy and recycled water)**
- **How to finance water quality improvements**
- **Protecting public health**
- **Ensuring benefits and impacts are distributed equitably**

What issues are we missing?

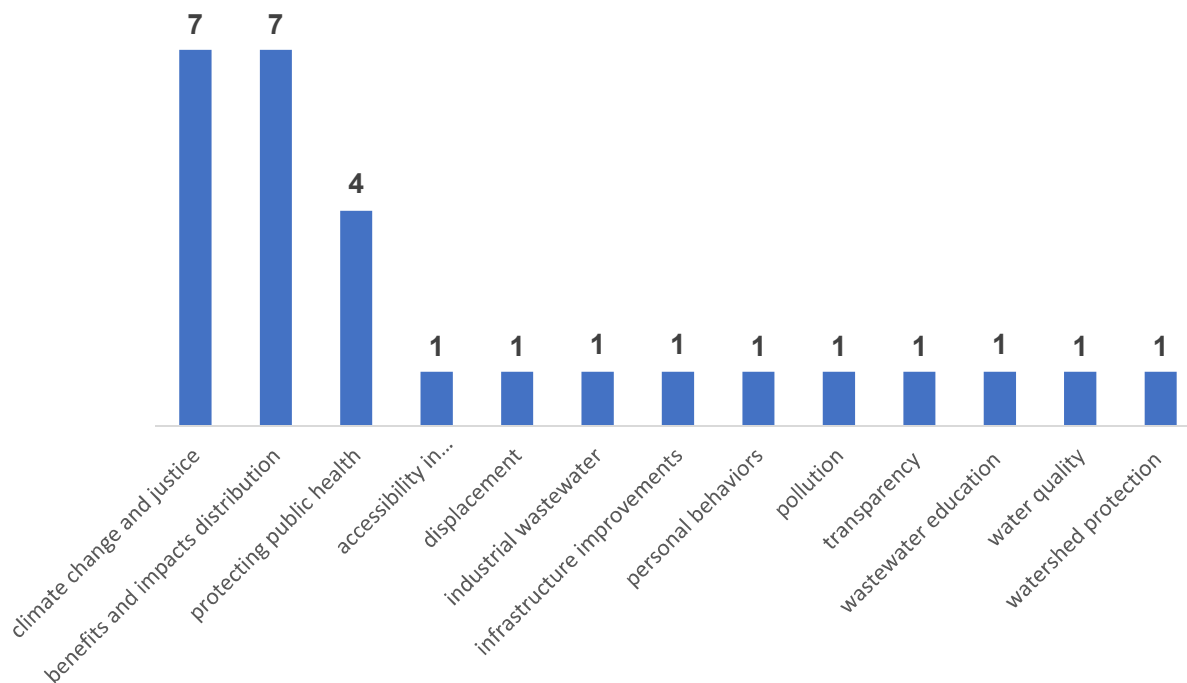
Participants said consideration of:

- Small businesses along the Snohomish/King County border
- Recycled water and water efficiency
- How water gets into groundwater and pollutes aquifers
- Protecting natural environments and ecosystems given the rapid growth
- Green economy and jobs that pay well in water industry
- Engagement with tribes because they have water rights
- How to empower community to participate in clean water solutions/how each person can be part of the solution

Which of these issues are most important to you?

Effectively addressing climate change and the surrounding issues of climate justice, equitable distribution of benefits and impacts, and public health protections were the top issues for participants. Participants also spoke in detail about improvements in government, business and residential practices that can improve environmental health.

Figure 3. Key Issues for the Clean Water Plan



Knowing that the plan will define what the County will do over the next few decades, what priorities should we consider when planning our water quality future? What's most important to you? What does a successful plan look like to you?

Participants provided about 18 long-term priorities or markers of a successful plan. The four most common priorities were:

- Accessible and equitable outreach
- Engagement with tribal communities
- Increased public health protections
- Improved water quality

Most frequently, participants emphasized the importance of an accessible and equitable outreach and planning process. This includes multilingual outreach, convenient meeting locations, and compensation for participation.

The second-most frequent priorities or markers of success were reducing climate impacts, better public education, equitable distribution of benefits and impacts, exceeding environmental regulations, species protections, and a sustainable planning process.

The third-most frequently mentioned were affordability, government collaboration, developing a plan with measurable outcomes, addressing the most critical needs, proactive system maintenance, transparency, improvements in water scarcity, and proactive youth engagement.

Are you interested in being involved or staying up to date on the Clean Water Plan and the process to develop the Plan? If yes, in what capacity? If no, why not?

Nearly all participants indicated they are interested in staying involved. A few said they'd like to learn more about what that could look like and what the commitment is. A few indicated they'd like to learn and share best practices for reaching diverse audiences, help bridge the communication gap with communities, and bring in other people to get engaged. Two individuals indicated they'd possibly be interested in a more formal role, such as participation in an advisory group.

Next Steps

The Regional Engagement Team will be conducting additional early outreach and community interviews, using feedback from this first round of interviews during spring and summer 2019. Information from these interviews, particularly that relating to priorities and key issues, will be presented to the technical Planning Team to inform next phases in Clean Water Plan development.

Alternative formats available 206-477-5371 TTY relay: 711