



King County

Protecting Our Waters

Doing our part on rainy days

Water Quality Assessment and Monitoring Study Update

November 2014

Bacteria Decreasing in Area Waterways

Assessment of existing water quality data is under way in Elliott Bay, Lake Union/Ship Canal, and the Duwamish River. In one early finding, data from 1980 to the present show that levels of bacteria are decreasing in these three water bodies.

A number of factors may have led to the improvement. Since 1980, there are fewer on-site septic systems, better agricultural practices, new requirements for managing stormwater, and more CSOs have been controlled. External experts on the assessment's [Science and Technical Review Team](#) suggested that publishing this information may lead to future studies to document the reasons for the decrease.

In another early finding, scientists have noticed a natural "copper cycle" that is different from other metals. Other metals are typically found at higher concentrations deep under water. But in the summer months, more copper is found closer to the water surface. The amount of metals found in the water bodies is low and meets water quality standards.

More information is available on the assessment's website. The [Project Library](#) includes a conference poster from May 2014 showing the decline of bacteria in the Duwamish and Green Rivers. The Initial Findings and Project Updates presentation from the [Review Team's](#) September 22 meeting is also available on line.

Why an assessment?

The assessment will inform King County's [Combined Sewer Overflow \(CSO\) Program](#), now called **Protecting Our Waters**. This program is needed to prevent pollution caused by overflows of excess stormwater and sewage on rainy days. The assessment will help ensure that investments in CSO control are well planned to optimize water quality improvements in Elliott Bay, Lake Union/Ship Canal, and the Duwamish River.

Assessment Documents Planned

The assessment's findings will be published in seven documents, scheduled to be released throughout 2015.



Find out more on [the Web](#) at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/wastewater/CSO/WQstudy.aspx> or by contacting Erika Peterson, at 206-477-5525 or Erika.peterson@kingcounty.gov.

Accessible formats available upon request – 206-477-5371 or TTY 711