



King County

Protecting Our Waters

Doing our part on rainy days

Water Quality Assessment and Monitoring Study Update

October 2016

Assessment to be published in 2017

The Water Quality Assessment and Monitoring Study brings together decades of data and results from new studies to give a comprehensive look at water quality in Elliott Bay, Lake Union/Ship Canal, and the Duwamish Estuary. King County will publish it in 2017.

The assessment was originally scheduled for publication in 2016. But the County decided to take more time to incorporate feedback and fine-tune the documents. It will take ten reports to document three years of technical work!

Until publication, King County will continue to share findings through this newsletter, meetings, and briefings. You can find [Science and Technical Review Team](#) presentations and meeting summaries in the [project library on the Web](#).

Findings inform CSO Program

King County conducted the assessment to inform its [plan to control combined sewer overflows \(CSOs\)](#). The findings are already informing work on the 2018 CSO Plan Update.

For example, the assessment confirms that King County and Seattle's work to control all CSOs by 2030 will significantly reduce bacteria loading to the water bodies. This is important since bacteria from sewage can make people sick.

Other pathways need attention

But uncontrolled CSOs are not the only problem facing these waterbodies. The assessment shows that different pathways bring bacteria and other types of pollution to the water. Stormwater, creosote-treated pilings, and boat paint containing copper, and are examples of other pathways requiring continued attention and a commitment to increased action. King County is one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. It will take a combination of efforts and partnerships to achieve compliance with all water quality standards.

Why an assessment?

The assessment will inform King County's **Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Program**, now called **Protecting Our Waters**. 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 Estuary.

2013	2014	2015	2016	2017-18
Involve interested parties and public				
Develop Study questions & Scope				
	Perform scientific analysis & produce synthesis report (literature search; fill data gaps; synthesis report)			
	Independent Science and Technical Team review of technical work			
		Document production		
			Use study results in next CSO control program review and plan update due to regulators in 2018	

We can do it

The findings highlight the importance of current and future regulations, programs, and projects. But the good news is our region knows how to protect water quality. We [built our sewage treatment system in the 1960s](#) and have been working to control CSOs since 1979. These and other actions, investments, and regulations have paid off. Beyond cleaning up Lake Washington, the assessment shows that water quality trends have continued to improve over the last 40 years for bacteria, nutrients, and dissolved oxygen, even as our region has grown. This is a remarkable achievement, and likely the result of many factors—including the region’s investment in stormwater, wastewater, and land use management.



However, there is more to do. The water bodies do not always meet water quality standards for some parameters, including bacteria, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and PCBs (industrial chemicals banned in 1979). Many organizations are doing excellent work tackling specific water quality issues. The assessment underscores the importance of these efforts, and can support their work with technical information.

Next steps

The County will publish the ten reports documenting the Water Quality Assessment and Monitoring Study in spring 2017. King County will use the results to guide its work to control CSOs. As a leader in water quality, the County will share the assessment with partner organizations, including the City of Seattle, scientists, and interested parties for use in their water quality programs.

Find out more on the web at <http://www.kingcounty.gov/services/environment/wastewater/cso/projects/water-quality-study.aspx> or by contacting **Erika Peterson**, at 206-477-5525 or Erika.peterson@kingcounty.gov. [Click here](#) to sign up or unsubscribe to this newsletter. Select “WTD - Water Quality Assessment Update” from the list.