



## Clean Water Advisory Committee

February 19, 2026

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Lynn Bahrych, Jenny DeGroot, Bob Eagan, Vicki Heater, Kai Hoffman-Krull, Ann Jarrell, Judy Meyer, Richard Locke, Mark Prugar, Kimbal Sundberg

**Ex-officio, County support staff, and members of public:** Krista Chavez, Katherine Combs, Susan Eshelman, Andy Eshelman, Ethan Schmidt, Kendra Smith, Nick Walsh

9:01 AM      **Convene Meeting**      *Kimbal Sundberg*

9:02 AM      **Public Comment**      *none*

### 9:03 AM      **Business Operations**

- Welcome new CWAC member - Mark Prugar: District 1, Position 1 (San Juan Island)

Mark: thank you, I became Cattle Point district Water Commissioner after moving here in 2017, we operate a desalination plant taking salt water from Griffin Bay and distribute to 44 customers. The process takes energy. But it is the only alternative because of seawater intrusion in our groundwater.

- Approve February 19th Agenda: no additions or corrections. The agenda is approved

- Approve December 11th Minutes: Jenny suggests a small wording change to the section about eDNA. Jenny moves to approve the minutes with that correction, Judy seconds. Minutes as edited are approved

- Review 2025 CWAC Annual Report

Kendra: this is an annual requirement for the CWAC to inform Council of activities, Tyler provided some information about our resiliency work and other items. It was sent out to committee members to review.

Vicki: I didn't receive a copy, several other members didn't see it either

ACTION: Susan will make sure to send that to everyone in the committee (DONE 2/19/26)

- Vote for a 2026 CWAC chair and vice-chair

Kim, Judy, Vicki, and Jenny will all be terming out and ineligible to continue on the CWAC after June.

-some discussion, no nominations or volunteers. Kai or Rick may be ready to chair in a year or so. Must decide in April. Kendra can discuss with Jane Fuller (our Council liaison) the idea of temporary extensions for members

- Discuss a potential schedule change for subcommittee meetings.

Vicki: we did last subcommittee meetings back-to-back, I propose we continue doing it with that structure

Kim: Do we need to formalize that in some way to continue doing that in future? If not, I agree Susan should try to schedule back-to-back subcommittee meetings. Note: 2026 meeting schedule on Agenda.

Bob: Roy Stanton is a past waterworks operator who's interested in being on the committee. Could we include people like him on emails for these subcommittee meetings so they can learn more about what's going on?

ACTION: Susan will check with County clerk to be sure preparations are being sorted for new CWAC member

- Susan and Tyler have discussed this and they have a list of prospective CWAC members including Roy

## 9:28 AM      **Staff & Agency Updates**

### **Environmental Stewardship**

*Kendra Smith*

We're fully staffed, moving on several capital projects including Lopez water redistribution. Humming along with the items in our CIP. The Killebrew culvert looks great, that crew & designer did a very nice job. The adjacent upstream property owner is interested in fish passage through his ponds – we submitted a Letter of Interest for Salmon Recovery funding; we did a hand-off to the Conservation District on that & we're working through the details.

Bob: anything on the horizon for Laporte on other side of that culvert?

Kendra: yes, we'll be looking at that next. It's not fish passable and still needs to be fixed. We should continue to discuss that, there are resources on Orcas because we were fully reimbursed by FEMA 1.7 million. We had set the rate structure conservatively in case that didn't happen so now there is additional money in the capital fund for Orcas. To move it along in next few years our department would need to take it instead of Public Works. If Laporte is important to this committee, let's get it on the list for the CIP.

Jenny: there may be other salmon recovery culverts on Orcas, will there be potential for matching funds in the future? We're always trying to lead with watersheds where we have evidence of salmonid presence. Doe Bay is a sunken culvert put in under emergency measures, but there's evidence it's an impact to trout populations

Kendra: because that was a road failure at Doe Bay it's required to be addressed by Public Works.

Jenny: some of the largest fish we found were below that culvert, if they get flushed, they can't move back up - more discussion about the details and alternatives possible for Doe Bay and if Clean Water could take it over

Kendra: that and Laporte are two key projects. If folks have ideas for other sites that need to rise to top of the list, particularly on Orcas, please let me know and we can adjust CIP for coming year and start design work

Kim: using the Utility to improve drainage fits with improving salmonid access and habitat. Maybe through this upcoming integrated water management plan we can identify more of those, many are identified in the salmon recovery plan already, and we can make Council more aware of common goals.

### **SJC Health**

*Ethan Schmidt*

Our department is Health and Community Services, the new division is Disease Prevention and Environmental Health. With drinking water it's business as usual, reviewing applications. We're updating local onsite sewage code in line with state code finalized last year. We did an annual contract update with our hydrogeologist. We have an intern to help with data entry for well GIS map. I've been working on the grant proposal I talked about for the source water application. Vicki Heater has been helping, we've identified two main scopes of work:

- Further refining and updating the monitoring network for North Lopez, looking at the feasibility for recharge (Ethan wants to meet with you about that in the next couple weeks, Kendra)

-and on SJI, there's the unique challenge of fractured bedrock geology. Mapping the aquifer – looking at targeted areas to track recharge and better understand how bedrock wells respond to recharge, seasonally and in response to pumping events throughout the year.

Richard: on the recharge question and mapping the cycles, are you doing that work or proposing to do it?

Ethan: we don't have the capacity now, so we'd likely have the hydrogeologist we already contracted with do the bulk of the work. We hope the funding will come from this grant we're applying for

Bob: the scope of the work is defined so cost estimate can be presented as part of the grant

- Bob discusses more details for how this type of proposal funding works

-Richard is interested in seeing the Scope of Work and helping out

ACTION: there was a similar aquifer modeling process with Eastsound. Vicki will send Richard a copy of that

-we can dive into details about this more during our subcommittee meeting next month.

9:52 AM      **Presentation: Septic Inspection Data**

*Katherine Combs*

Program aims to identify failing OSS and replace when needed. Failure is a condition that inadequately treats sewage or doesn't protect public from sewage. Could mean repairing minor leaks or resurfacing a drain field. Inspections can identify failures in progress or before they happen, required by county code. We track through completion, either design and installation if required, or if not, then through repair with licensed professional. Now we've updated to using online "RME" database system, can use it to send reminders for inspections. Kate reviews the rebate program; we've been able to increase the rebate due to the LIO grant and it can cover inspection or pumping. And we're working on inventorying of OSS with new software.

Countywide data: in 2024, 21% compliant with OSS inspections, and in 2025 19%. That doesn't include homeowner inspections of which there are at least 1,000. There may be some undercounting due to misclassification of septic types. Some challenges include the feasibility of county-wide enforcement. The inspection reminders aim to increase awareness. OSS failure rates were 6% in 2024-25 (failures reported at inspection). For marine sensitive area data e.g. near commercial shellfish growing operations we're developing a more robust inspection system; in 2024-25 inspection compliance was 46% and failure rate was 1%

**QUESTIONS**

Kim: do you plan to incorporate the owner inspections into this database with your new tracking system?

Kate: yes; only licensed professionals can create accounts in RME. But we can scan in their paper forms

In order to know if your system is near a marine sensitive area, it's in our sewage code, there's a map,

<https://www.sanjuancountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/841/On-Site-Sewage-System-Operation-and-Maintenance-Program-Plan-PDF>

Kendra: does that include 100-year floodplain property owners?

Kate: not sure, this was set when we developed our initial system in 2007, some data not yet in new system

ACTION: Kate will work with Susan to include those overlays

Mark: in my neighborhood we have a combination of gravity and pump fed systems, is the schedule different?

Kate: yes, that anything with moving components, like a pump, needs to be inspected annually

Kim: is this funded out of the fixed OSS tax on properties?

Kate: partly, and partly from a DoH grant, and now partly from LIO funding

10:07 AM      **Subcommittee Updates**

Neither Surface Water nor Groundwater met in January; both plan to meet in March.

10:08 AM      **New Business**

- Review 2026 Workplan & Clean Water scope of services

*Kendra Smith*

Challenging fiscal times for the County, need restructuring strategies where appropriate. One area identified was to move several programs currently in the '06' fund, which is grant-based, into the Clean Water utility. If we want to ensure water-related programming is under one roof, look at moving salmon recovery funding.

Kendra reviews details as laid out in the memo she sent. Could move staff into the Utility and streamline the accounting. Part of a strategy to strengthen the department as County continues to face funding challenges

**DISCUSSION**

-the purpose of the utility is clean water and salmon recovery, but not the 'deep blue' marine program. We can easily justify, based on citations in code, to have these other program elements in the Utility

- LIO funding continues through 2028. If grant funding is reduced, staff hours would need to be reduced.

Salmon recovery and LIO are funding two full time positions.

Mark: is salmon recovery a separate organization? Is LIO? Have you had discussions with them on this?

Kendra: Salmon Recovery and Lead Entity are state programs that are fully funded, they fund staff but their funding came from this '06' fund that was made up of both grants and general fund. It would be much easier to bypass that fund from an accounting point of view. Salmon Recovery and LIO have all worked together in

the marine program, although both of those programs deal with water quality and shorelines. Looking at next five years, focus is on freshwater systems, so it makes sense to migrate staff there.

Vicky: it would help to see this graphically, an organizational chart showing budget plans

Kendra: I can send that, but this is just a step one in terms of planning. County Council has asked for the 'green' departments to look at restructuring. The key is to get our programming covered by restricted funds. (The green departments include all the ag related e.g. noxious weeds, parks and fair, Land Bank, and ES)

Kim: I'm putting in another plug for the concept of integrated water management, that can be part of this pitch, CW and Health are working together and both funded by LIO, it's all water-oriented

Kendra: if you're supportive, I'd like to bring it to County Council in March and proceed with a budget amendment to migrate those staff and those grants into the Clean Water Utility.

MOTION: to approve recommendation as put forward in Kendra's memo to go to Council with adjustment of programs in the CW Utility. Jenny so moves, Mark seconds.

Vicki: I'll approve the motion, but with the addition that this committee will be provided the organizational structure we referred to earlier and a more detailed budget

ACTION: Kendra can prepare that, it will be part of the package to Council, will send it to CWAC in next week -It will shift Sam and Katie and all their associated grants (Salmon Recovery, LIO, OSS, water resiliency grant) and because Angela Broderick is leading on the water resiliency she'll migrate over to CW while working on it. The MRC and anything associated with eelgrass, vessels, etc. will still be associated with the marine program.

Kendra: I'll need to do a series of budget amendments and have them submitted by end of March. I'm aiming to get this into Council either March 3<sup>rd</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup>

Kim calls the motion: all in favor, the motion passes.

#### 10:40 AM **Housekeeping**

Vacant CWAC seats: District 2 (Orcas) Position 5, District 3 (Lopez/Shaw) Positions 10 & 12

Future vacant seat: four member terms will be expiring in July/August of this year

- already discussed earlier in meeting (during Business Operations)

#### 10:41 AM **Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee is seeking a new CWAC liaison**

Angela requests a new liaison. Next meeting is March 26<sup>th</sup>. Lynn was the previous liaison

Lynn: the changing climate is involved in all our water-related discussions. It's a wonderful and diverse group. Not a huge time commitment. Meetings are engaging, many nexuses with topics discussed in this meeting.

Kendra: starting in June, the water resiliency work will be a two-year effort, this committee will be involved

Kim: does the water resiliency grant have a tight scope or is it up to County how to deal with it?

Kendra: we've submitted a framework that can be adjusted as we get more into details. That money supports Angela's time, and we'll build in some resources for the groundwater and work that Ethan and Vicky are doing

Kim: I gave Susan a draft of an outline for integrated water management prior to this meeting. I'd like to start fleshing that out with this group, maybe at the subcommittee level in March. With Ethan working to classify some aquifers, looking at what recharge areas need to be protected, etc. It's exciting stuff

Susan: we put out a quarterly newsletter with a specific theme; yesterday at our departmental meeting, we discussed how lucky we are to have these advisory committees and their terrific input. We'd like to highlight this work in next month's newsletter by listing out each committee with their purpose and success and members' names and expertise. Susan asks,

-Any specific successes you'd like us to mention? And let us know if you'd like to receive this newsletter,

Judy: sounds like a great opportunity to recruit!

#### 10:50 AM **Adjourn meeting**