



Clean Water Advisory - Subcommittees

March 19, 2026

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Jenny DeGroot, Bob Eagan, Vicki Heater, Kai Hoffman-Krull, Ann Jarrell, Judy Meyer, Mark Prugar, Kimbal Sundberg

Ex-officio, County support staff, and members of public: Angela Broderick, Tyler Davis, Susan Eshelman, Andy Eshelman, Jane Fuller, Ethan Schmidt, Kendra Smith, Roy Stanton, Nick Walsh

9:02 AM **Convene Groundwater Subcommittee Meeting**

Kim Sundberg

9:03 AM **Housekeeping**

- Interest in an in-person meeting or a yearly field visit/retreat?

Susan: we've done this in the past, we want to get people thinking about it

Kim: a lot of great streams and restoration projects to visit, but it's costly and there's logistics

Judy: we should discuss this later when it's not so wet and dreary

Vicki: what kind of transportation resources could you offer for that?

Tyler & Susan: we can rent the van for a day/half-day, it seats nine or possibly twelve

ACTION: let's discuss this again more in early summer

9:08 AM • Continued conversation about a back-to-back subcommittee meeting schedule

Tyler: Any decisions require a full CWAC quorum; we're required to meet that way at least six times a year

Kim: we've never made decisions at subcommittee meetings; we flesh out issues to bring to main CWAC

Vicki: in RCW's, subcommittees make recommendations to main body; they won't be making decisions.

Judy: we'd still have regular CWAC meetings every other month, this is just a joint-subcommittee meeting

Susan: it just doesn't make sense via the code, it looks just like a regular meeting

Angela: if a subcommittee has a quorum present, it needs to be publicly noticed/accessible

More discussion: -this could be a timing issue, schedule one meeting for the earlier hour and then the next

- and sometimes it will be beneficial for a subcommittee to schedule a longer independent meeting

- it's the integrative approach, these issues are increasingly intertwined, the crossover is valuable

- many members are interested in both subcommittees

- for members timing out, they can continue to be part of subcommittees and inform in that way

Jane: decisions made in subcommittees guided by staff who will bring things back to the full committee

9:18 AM **Groundwater Subcommittee Business Operations**

Any updates on the USGS Groundwater Recharge Study? Vicki: no, they're saying it'll be June

Ethan: I checked in with USGS, it's going through editorial review. USGS presenting at a symposium in May and offered to present data to us as a local group first, if folks are interested, we could arrange that

Judy: yes we are very interested, we've been waiting anxiously. Could we have that presentation in April?

ACTION: Ethan will ask the USGS scientist about presenting in April at CWAC full meeting

Judy: we'll have questions, they probably won't all be answered in the publication so it would be useful

Jane: I'd also like a presentation to Council. We've been promised this since I got on council in 2023.

Bob: I'd like to see the report first so I have more context when the presentation is made, but it's a living document so maybe we can circle back with them following the report – will there be a dialogue?

Vicki: I think their presentation in May will be their final document and I want the opportunity to read it ahead of that and expect them to present to us first

Ethan: it was my impression that the symposium presentation will already be in advance of final report. It sounds like the hydrogeology part of the work is completed, it's just formatting and review for publication.

Kim: they can do it via Teams, or they can come to San Juan Island, no travel budget isn't an excuse

Ann: did you say there's a documented statement that they had committed to present to us first?

Vicki: I understood they would present a preliminary draft to SJ council. There is a contract for the project

Ethan: I can investigate that. If they balk at the timeline then we can refer to contract language (that was arranged by Kyle Dodd prior to his departure). What exactly is the ask? It sounds like consensus that we want the presentation prior to the final published draft.

-brief discussion of exactly who our contact is at Ecology, Jeff Cederbaum, but Kelly Hamilton comes instead

Kim: so first, let's go to the contract as to what was promised about presenting the data. And then talk to USGS about the Council's desire to hear a presentation and this committee (at full CWAC meeting in April)

ACTIONS: Ethan will reach out to USGS about presenting first and if there's pushback go to the contract

9:39 AM **Public Comment** *none*

9:40 AM **General Groundwater subcommittee business** *Vicki Heater*

Vicki: Ethan and I working on a grant project with the expertise of County hydrogeologist, Glen Driscoll. We have a useful scope of work coming up building on previous work on Lopez and focusing on why Lopez is such a focus of seawater intrusion in the county. And some plans for groundwater monitoring on SJL.

As for this USGS study, it won't answer what's going on underground, it leaves out certain elements and simply looks at recharge and relates that to demand and comes up with a water balance that way. But that doesn't incorporate the dynamic of what's happening in the aquifer and where and how water is stored

Jane: agreed, this study will be important but there will be a lot more questions to be answered

Kim: it's a complex problem, this is just a modeling study

Ethan: back to Vicki's initial news, this grant was recommended to us from Krista Chavez from State Dept. of Health. County Council needs to give permission for these

9:47 AM **Adjourn Groundwater Subcommittee; Convene Surface Water Subcommittee Meeting**

9:48 AM **Public Comment** *none*

9:49 AM **Surface Water Subcommittee Business Operations**

- Integrated Watershed Resource Management (IWRM) outline *Kimbal Sundberg*

Angela: the grant is for LIO through Dept. of Ecology. (shares screen)

San Juan County Water Resilience Strategy, April- June 2026

Finalizing details with Ecology, information collecting and developing stakeholder engagement plan,

- the job for this group is gathering existing water resource reports studies and GIS databases
- July -Sept, continue gathering water quality, quantity, habitat, land use and climate data. Creating maps, looking at watershed conditions and starting to develop a story map. Deliverable: workshop series with feedback summary, and complete a story map and a good forward-facing community engagement page
- Some final deliverables through LIO will be to collaborate with some other districts, maybe Skagit and Island, and possibly present final IWRM plans together, lots of reporting and consultation.

Angela needs: gather feedback on that workplan and timeline & ensure she know what resources to gather

Kim: thanks Angela that was a great overview. Do you have a link to that outline you can share with us?

ACTION: Angela will share a link to the outline just presented

Kim: an integrated water resource management plan is a comprehensive approach that coordinates resources while maximizing environmental protection, it's a holistic approach, can produce improved water quality and conflict prevention.

ACTION: Kim tells Angela (and County staff at large) that he wants to help and can stay on as an ex-officio in terms of information-gathering toward this effort

Kim put together a draft outline, it's divided into groundwater and surface water resources,

-Aquifer typing data, yield information (difficult on a county-wide basis but we do have some well pump tests etc. and can make estimates). Some of that information is in County records as approvals for new water sources and some with Ecology. County has had some water metering requirements for new connections and there are some other metering data.

-There are organic issues like fecal coliform and inorganic like arsenic. And emerging contaminants in the County like PFAS which has emerged recently.

-Water rights, some established and some in progress – mapping where they exist

-Priority aquifers are places where large systems are dependent on groundwater, like Eastsound. Where there are well-fields that need to be protected. Issues with Seawater intrusion, largely on Lopez but also some places in SJI. Then places using surface water to supply large communities like FH and ES

-Rainwater catchment; SJ County was instrumental in changing some state regulations with Ecology

-Ag use, streams (both annual and perennial) and how those surface waters are affected.

Kim lists a variety of committees, departments and agencies that need to be brought into this plan, plus partners and various others who do research like Wild Fish conservancy

Kendra: that was a great synopsis. This document should serve as the implementation plan to the comp plan. Prioritize and road map for action for next 50 years. Getting clarity and information readily available to the public in the form of good maps for decision making about wells, property purchase, etc.

Judy: do you envision this resulting in some restructuring of county departments? It's linked to comp plan, but do we see different regulations coming out of it? This is only worth doing if it's implemented

Kendra: Angela has also been engaging in roundtables, working with stakeholders and water users. And she'll continue to do that to get clear on where the opportunities and barriers are.

Judy: all of this has been about freshwater resources, what about interaction with the marine environment?

Kendra: there will be discussions about the nearshore and impacts on salmon for example. And discussions will also consider desalination and where that's appropriate. It's about understanding the limits of the system, what can be done and who will pay for it. This is a big lift and may take more than two years

Judy: it may be helpful to see the result of someone else's water management plan

Kendra: we can look around but it's hard to find similar examples, maybe other island communities

Kim: this is about education, explaining where water comes from

Angela: we spent two years developing the climate element and it came up that water is top of mind and there's a lack of basic awareness. So even if the news isn't always good, information is empowering.

Kendra: we'll need to work to frame this story for people and help them drive down to their question

Jenny: agreed – maps are what people care about most

Ann: for those workshops, I suggest giving an outline first about exactly where people's water comes from.

Vicki: I think it would be good for all of us to look at history of the CWAC, we've gone over this before

Kendra: Some other questions - like, is there ancient groundwater (in certain places on Orcas and Shaw) that we might approach differently than we would if it were getting recharged on an annual basis

Ethan: I'm not familiar with the water-type age analysis?

Kim: it had to do with isotopic ratios. - discussion of the water cycle and what these data mean

Vicki: this is just a snapshot of a few wells and not a full study, dangerous to make largescale extrapolation.

The chemistry work USGS did several years ago on recharge analysis they looked at certain isotopes

Kim: it would be interesting to bring more well-drillers into these discussions.

Bob: It's a complex issue. Wells are dynamic and won't continue to behave as they did when first drilled.

Kendra: over time as more people move here, we can minimize conflict by providing good information

Bob: ideally our community would understand that specific locations produce high yields of water and need to be understood properly to be able to distribute to other areas where there isn't water.

-discussion of past example on Orcas of variable water source/needs.

Bob: we all have a right to water. That's what IWRM is about, ensuring there's enough for everyone.

In terms of monitoring, we should have dataloggers in the well of interest as well as in neighboring well and expect it to be an ongoing process. A 24-hour or six-day pump test is just still just a snapshot.

Kendra: I think you're making a good point about conveying clear expectations to the public about what we don't know, we'll provide the data we have and show the limits. It's difficult to look underground

10:55 AM **Critical Area ordinance update**

Susan Eshelman

This is being updated now, wanted it to be on everyone's radar. You can look at it and contribute input.

Deadline for comments? meant to be officially adopted in April – it's through Department of Community Development (DCD) <https://www.sanjuancountywa.gov/m/newsflash/home/detail/2129>

Kendra: note that I'm going to take some leave over the next few months, I'll be back July 1. We'll have coverage from my staff. I'll see everyone in a month at the full meeting – and hopefully USGS too

10:59 AM **Adjourn Surface Water Subcommittee Meeting**