



Clean Water Advisory - Subcommittees

May 21, 2026

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

Ex-officio, County support staff, and members of public: Angela Broderick, Tyler Davis, Susan Eshelman, Jane Fuller, Jessica Hudson, Ethan Schmidt, Lynn Bahrych

9:00 AM Convene Surface Water Subcommittee Meeting

Kimbal Sundberg

Thanks for being here everyone, we just have one main agenda item today to discuss IWRM with Angela.

9:01 AM Public Comment

none

9:02 AM Surface Water Subcommittee Business Operations

Kim: reminder there's a Council workshop with the USGS presentation June 8th, a link to that was sent out. If you're available that day, please watch that presentation.

Susan: and we have four applicants to the CWAC, we've interviewed three so far. We hope to discuss recommendations at the June meeting

9:03 AM Integrated Watershed Resources Management (IWRM) Discussion

Angela Broderick

Thanks to Angela and Susan for sending out the discussion topics in advance! That was helpful

Angela: thanks for the 'brain-dump' here, we're about to lose some institutional knowledge from the CWAC.

Re-cap, this project is meant to be a holistic approach to the entire water cycle, looking at different land use and environmental needs, coordinating uses long term, consider sustainability and resilience of our systems.

Angela shares a slide,

2026 – water resource inventory and baseline assessment. QAPP, factsheet, engagement

2027 – generate strategic plan. Need Island-specific workshops with key stakeholders – that's to discuss today.

Ann: when you say workshop, you mean with the public invited?

Angela: both/and. There'll be island-specific work sessions, first focused on including key water stakeholders.

But there's a public component that may get involved following the work groups and refining the plan. There's an important piece of public education here, setting up a good website, useful tools, etc. There will be community engagement but not to hammer out the specifics of the plan Ann: how to reach the stakeholders?

Angela: that's what we want to brainstorm today, make sure we're reaching the right people

Vicki: in the past we've hired professional consultants for this type of thing, it's a huge amount of work Angela: we scoped doing it in house, I'm coordinator working with CW staff. I've also been working on the climate action plan. We haven't finalized budget so let us know if you think there are certain elements where a consultant would be most helpful? Anyone we should consider?

Kim: there's value to having county employees work on this, it adds expertise within the County. And our situation is so unique the local knowledge is meaningful

-Angela clarifies exact amount and duration of the grant.

Jane: I concur with Kim about engaging County staff in this exercise. I've been following Climate plan closely, want to make sure these plans don't just sit on the shelf – we may benefit from having real ownership here.

What is the problem statement? Goal is to develop an IWRM document. What are we working towards and who would be the players implicated in implementation?

Vicki: consultants can help with stream gauging, we still don't know volumes in streams. It's not a huge budget.

Angela: these funds are about identifying the pieces. We want a well-metering pilot project out of this.

Bob: I'd like to see added to this heading that it's focused on drinking water

Angela: not necessarily, it's all water, water systems as a whole

Bob: I struggle with that. I understand how they all mesh together but it's difficult to have a discussion that isn't focused on a particular space. The document we're working on today is more focused on drinking water. For our subcommittees, one focused on stormwater management and one drinking water, helps to delineate. And we have an independent constituency who may pushback against meters etc. Defining stakeholders, best to think about larger systems (group A systems) and work our way down to group B's. The missing element here is often water level and meter readings –need both to understand use and recovery

Ann: to the question of what specific quantitative reports exist? Can we make a list of what we can reference and then identify the gaps?

Ethan: how do you plan to engage with the Health Dept. on this? Want to ensure we're not at cross-purposes; we want to share what we're doing and what we have

9:29 AM Discussion organized based on the Discussion Guide

Jenny: with the work I do with salmon recovery, that list of resources would be great. I often can't find stuff on SJC website. Both Vicki and I have done a lot of data collection, water quality with the Conservation district - where is that? Want to have access to all that literature. Like from 2012-14, stormwater data, baseline data

Vicki: still on question #1 (what is available?). It seems like some of us need to get together and go over some of this stuff. I have some early water quality monitoring data from streams on my computer, Jenny's data, etc.

Susan: let's start with topics of the studies and then who would be on that subcommittee? Vicki and Jenny

Ethan: there may be some of those files at Health Dept., but I don't have time to add another subcommittee

Susan: maybe that subcommittee can create a list like an annotated bibliography that you can just look over

Jane: question #5 refers to stakeholders, I think that question should move closer to the top. Taking stock of who's been involved in all these studies and to what purpose early on

I want to pose the question, what's the problem we're trying to solve? What's this really about? Answering that higher level question will be important to shape the work that flows from that. And we want interdepartmental work groups around different themes. We're approaching a time with low to no funding for staff and further studies

Angela: Current goal is to develop a comprehensive approach to managing water resources that considers all aspects of the water cycle across this diverse landscape, considering land use and environmental needs, and coordinating water use across agricultural, residential, and ecological sectors to ensure equitable access.

Ethan: in managing water resources, have we considered the legal view? Dept. of Ecology manages water

Angela: that's part of the regulatory landscape

Jane: That is pertinent to question 2 in the discussion guide.

Vicki: back to Jane's question about the problem statement. In the past when we made planning efforts, we started out with a core group of stakeholders and defined the problems. Then it was that the County had created two urban growth areas without adequate water resources, people drilling exempt unregulated wells

Jessica: we need to focus in on some specifics moving into this discussion

Bob: as a contractor, I generally think about what we're trying to finance. And what's going on with the County. There is funding and there's a grant Vicki and Ethan have been working on. I hear from Ethan that his workload is already hard then what happens if we receive that grant, how are we going to employ it?

Ethan: we have the same concerns, we lost capacity at Environmental Health, now we're a combined division.

Bob: source protection is about getting approval

Susan: so far, a lot of the feedback is about management barriers which is one of the questions

Angela: Let's look at how we're framing the problem and what we can do. For that first question, I'm hearing that a few of you have assorted datasets on your computers and you've agreed to come together as a subcommittee to get that together. I hear Jenny say those data need to be available to everyone all the time. To Jane's point, I'd like to discuss stakeholders and understand who the key players are. I'll also consider how to work with folks who have limited availability. Work groups are great but there needs to be a balance

9:55 AM Next Discussion Topic: who are key stakeholders? Groups and individuals

Kim: they'll include all the major water users, group A systems going down to group B. You get to the huge class of exempt well people. But group A are regulated by Health and the big players in water availability. Other stakeholders are people that use the surface water systems here, lake systems. CWAC deals with the connection between groundwater and streams. As far as flows, there are connections between ground and surface water resources. The Group A's who use those surface waters for their systems. Need to look at the big picture.

Jenny: connection with regulatory issues and ensuring Ecology continues to have a presence in these meetings is important. The County has had to deal with a lot of HPA violations. Having more involvement from WDFW would be helpful as well. And tribal members haven't always been as involved in our reports/discussions. Vicki: we have unresolved issues with the water users around Rosario, Cascade Lake, Doe Bay; that whole system and their managers are stakeholders. We've never reached a real management agreement in that area around measuring flow in Cascade Creek and levels in all the lakes and tributaries. Those are some of the most sufficient systems in the County

Jenny: Vicki's right, Moran State Park monitors that system and they have that data. I also do monthly stream flow information for the Land Bank going back a decade

Angela: any other examples of important challenges/stakeholder issues?

Jenny: enough water for salmon, that's one of the issues in the Cascade Creek watershed

Kim: there's a difference between the Eastsound water district (which owns all the water rights) and the Eastsound water utility. Trying to consolidate that management, that's very local to Orcas, getting interests to work together. Not sure if this can provide a forum for that.

Vicki: what's happening in Cascade and Mountain Lake is getting into the legal and political realm. How much depth is this plan going to have? What's the County's role? I see little capacity at the County level to have legal authority or leverage to manage the conflicts happening in this area – I see that as a major problem statement.

Susan: anything about Lopez or outer islands?

Vicki: with Lopez, there's a lot of concern there about seawater intrusion and the impact of growth –Jamie Stephens is on the Fisherman Bay water system board. The grant Ethan and I are working on now focuses on Lopez. We're trying to get more in-depth information about capacity there. There's concern about growth too

Kim: speaking of Lopez, one report I pulled up was Ron Mayo's rain catchment and desal reports. He was an early participant in water resource management committee. He was a retired civil engineer on Lopez that provided expertise leading to county water regs that allow for approval of rainwater and desalination systems

Ethan: we allow rainwater catchment with a building permit

As to Lopez Village and Cascade Creek - sounds like there's an issue of overallocation?

Kim: in Cascade Creek there is no instream flow allocation, it's all been appropriated to water rights owners. There was a hydrogeologic study done in that area, technical data about what's there in infrastructure and what it can produce. There's a lot of leaky plumbing and waste of water in that system that could be reallocated to protect fish habitat without impacting water users

Jenny: <https://www.sanjuancountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/862/East-Orcas-Water-Budget-Study-20072008-PDF>

-more specific discussion about Cascade Creek/Doe Bay systems. Need coordination. Issues with potential Olga service from Doe Bay, various efforts to deal with leaks.

Lynn: The State funds a Conservation Commission has an Irrigation Efficiencies program that might be a funding source or a model for the Olga/Doe Bay system.

Bob: Buck Smith's common point was "we can't manage what we don't measure"

Ethan: the Water Use Efficiency Report for Doe Bay shows significant improvement over the past 16 years, from a three-year annual average leakage of 24% (2010-12) to 9.5% (2023-25), so maybe they are making some of the necessary improvements?

QUESTION: What about issues in the ag or tourist sectors?

Kim: the VSP program and CD, they've dealt with agricultural voluntary stewardship plans. One component is to measure water quality but also amounts being used for watering animals etc. Some farms use a lot of water

Vicki: the VSP isn't easy to implement, issues with reporting. One lesson of the early program is not to collect that data unless they have a purpose. There's county code requiring wells to be metered but social pushback

Ethan: low hanging fruit is trying to get data from existing systems or from Ecology. Some users glad to report -

Kim raises issue of specific ag user downstream of Zylstra Lake in False Bay creek to irrigate hay fields with bad consequences for fish. Water rights details do not require reporting to Ecology. Is there effort from State to modernize these old water rights? They never considered instream flow for salmon or other species

-Kim and Jenny recall past grant, effort via SRFB to buy 1cfs in Cascade Creek but that grant had to be returned in March 2026 because Rosario did not want to sell even a small portion of their water right.. New owners had considered selling it but decided against it.

-Jenny describes issue of not enough water in fall at end of season when coho need to spawn. In those cases we've had to beg water users (Rosario, Olga, Park) to release water in order for salmon to be able to return. When we've done that, within an hour of voluntary water releases from the park, salmon can start moving.

Kim: In False Bay Creek, SJPT got the Zylstra water rights when they purchased the property from former owner and then transferred it to the Land Bank. Land Bank has considered putting it in the trust water right program, but no decision has been made.

-more discussion of issues with water rights, the possibility of ownership change in Rosario

Lynn: If there's a relinquishment of part of a water right, that can be documented and water will be available

Ann: One more stakeholder are the water haulers

Kim: water quality issues in Zylstra. Some public uses have had to shut down because of harmful algal blooms (HAB). Helping the public understand the connection between surface water warming, salmonid habitat, HAB and why the CW utility is restoring riparian vegetation along streams to cool surface waters.

Ann: there needs to be some kind of 'roadshow' to explain what people need to know, what the CIP is

Angela: public-facing resources are a component of this work

Ethan: if there could be short videos about this work, provide some of the expertise and information, connected to a map. A roadshow requires people to come to the event. It could be a both/and.

Angela: we discussed a subcommittee to pull together information, the IWRM Data Subcommittee

ACTION: Susan & Angela will have a touchpoint with management and then send an email about that

Jenny: will it have a SharePoint site where Kim or I can drop pdfs? Tyler: we have a SharePoint site but dormant.

11:00 AM **Adjourn Surface Water Subcommittee Meeting**