



King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Director's Office

King Street Center
201 South Jackson Street, Suite 700
Seattle, WA 98104-3855

December 8, 2010

Dear West Seattle Residents:

I am writing to update you on the Barton and Murray projects to reduce combined sewer overflows in West Seattle. As many of you know, since October 2009, King County has been working closely with West Seattle residents on these projects, which are required by law to protect our region's water quality. I appreciate the significant community involvement and input, because these are challenging projects. The neighborhoods are densely developed with steep topography, leaving few suitable locations for these improvements.

One project would employ a system of rain gardens and swales – known as a Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) project – between the sidewalks and streets in the Sunrise Heights and Westwood neighborhoods, to reduce overflows from the Barton Pump Station near Seattle's Lincoln Park.

The second project would entail building a 1-million-gallon storage tank beneath private property across from Seattle's Lowman Beach Park to control combined sewer overflows (CSOs) from King County's Murray Avenue Pump Station.

The Challenge: Protecting Puget Sound and Our Neighborhoods

State and federal water quality regulations require that King County limit CSOs at all of our facilities to no more than one overflow per year. CSOs occur during heavy rains when the volume of stormwater and sanitary sewage exceed our wastewater system's capacity and must be discharged to prevent flooding and sewer backups. King County has been working for decades to reduce these overflows by developing projects to manage surges of stormwater into our sewer system. That is a challenge that falls upon all of us, but most of all on the neighborhoods where new facilities must be located.

The Barton Pump Station, located south of Lincoln Park, currently experiences an average of four overflows a year. The Murray Pump Station, north of Lincoln Park, experiences an average of five overflows each year. Since late 2009, county staff has met with neighborhood residents at more than 16 public meetings, plus numerous meetings with groups like the Morgan Community Association and Fauntleroy Community Council.

In response to suggestions from the community, King County formed a Murray Basin Community Advisory Group representing the interests and needs of the community as they relate to the Murray Basin Combined Sewer Overflow Project.

King County heard the strong commitment from residents to protecting Puget Sound, as well as the significant concerns about locating wastewater facilities in neighborhoods. I want to thank all of the citizens who have participated in this difficult work. Your input has been invaluable and will continue to be critical throughout the process. I am committed to ensuring that we can protect Puget Sound with the least possible impact on neighborhoods.

After considering community input and evaluating more than two dozen alternatives for meeting CSO control requirements in the Barton and Murray Basins, the following options were identified to move forward:

“Rain Gardens” in the Barton Basin

A green infrastructure project for the Barton Basin will consist of planted areas between sidewalks and curbs in the Sunrise Heights and Westwood neighborhoods of West Seattle. Also known as “rain gardens,” these planted areas will be constructed in the city-owned right of way. The rain gardens are designed to reduce CSO overflows by capturing and infiltrating rainwater that would otherwise enter our sewer system. This area is uniquely suited for this type of project because of its gentle topography and the connection of street drains to the combined sewer system.

The project offers these important advantages:

- Vegetation allows stormwater runoff to infiltrate into soil rather than entering the combined sewer system. By maximizing use of natural processes, the project supports the region’s commitment to energy conservation and sustainability.
- King County will work with the neighborhood to enhance street aesthetics, minimize parking impacts, and respond to neighborhood preferences for the project.
- The project does not require any operating facilities, and responds to many West Seattle residents who expressed strong support for a “green” solution.
- This approach significantly reduces the risk of combined sewer overflows at Barton and reduces flows to the Murray Basin.

Underground Storage Tank in the Murray Basin

Identifying a CSO solution in the Murray Basin has been significantly more difficult than in Barton for a number of reasons:

- The volume of wastewater that must be controlled at Murray is 10 times greater than at Barton.
- Rain gardens and upper-basin storage are not feasible because of the topography of the basin and the existing configuration of sewer lines.
Undeveloped land in the bottom of the Murray basin is protected by critical areas and park preservation ordinances.

After considering the full range of community considerations and project requirements, King County will move forward with a project to locate an underground storage tank on property that is currently in private ownership across the street from the existing Murray Pump Station at Lowman Beach Park. This alternative offers these advantages:

- Fewer construction impacts to neighborhoods and parks.
- The vast majority of the project is underground, which provides opportunities to enhance the surface of the site following construction in a way that benefits the neighborhood (for example, additional green space).
- Allows surface components of the project and related improvements to be constructed outside of Lowman Beach Park.
- Allows for a single, reliable, facility located near the existing pump station.

The decision to choose a site that requires the purchase of private property did not come lightly. Taking this step is extremely difficult, but the options were limited. Our decisions must address neighborhood concerns, the wastewater system as a whole, and our obligations to clean up Puget Sound. King County will work closely with the property owners and with the tenants to ensure that they receive relocation assistance, including paid moving expenses.

Next Steps

King County is committed to continuing to work with you as these projects move forward. There are many opportunities ahead to be involved in these projects. In the spring of 2011, the State Environmental Policy Act review of the recommended proposal will begin with a threshold determination and formal comment period. During the design phase, the County will work closely with Murray residents on the design of facilities there, and with the Sunrise Heights and Westwood communities on aesthetic choices for green infrastructure. The County's work with the communities will become even more critical during construction of these projects, which will begin by December 2013.

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I know you may have questions about the projects, and I have designated Martha Tuttle, Water Quality Planner in the County's Wastewater Treatment Division, as my liaison to ensure that community concerns are addressed. Please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Tuttle at 206-684-1207 or martha.tuttle@kingcounty.gov with any questions or input as these projects proceed. Also, more information can be found at the following website:
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/csobeachprojects>

With your help, we can successfully implement projects that will protect Puget Sound and our communities for future generations. I thank you all for the dedication you bring to this work.

Sincerely,



Christie True
Director
Department of Natural Resources and Parks