



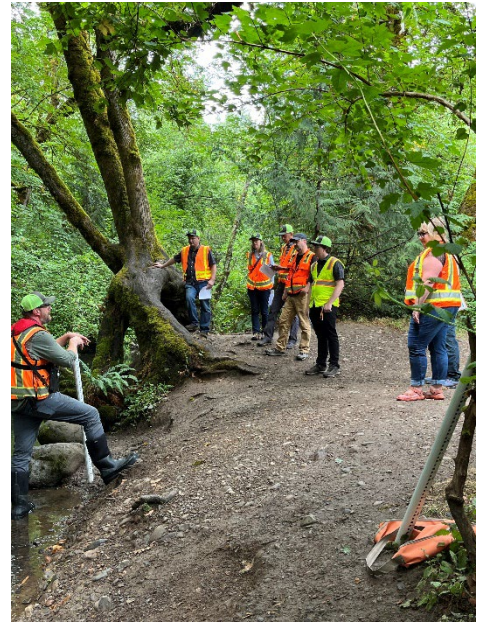
Clean Water Commission

ANNUAL REPORT

Clean Water Division

2024 REPORT - DRAFT

To be Approved April 2, 2025



Clark County Clean Water Commission

2024 Annual Report



2024 Commissioners

Glen DeWillie
Ted Gathe
Tracy Ceravolo
Kate Perkins +
Alejandra Cortes
Rudy Salakory
Phil Struck
Sandra Martin-Boehm ^

Matthew Jones, *
Robert Trost *
Jeff Kessenich *
John Chatel ~
Alison Schweitzer ~
Emily Hess ~

* Jan – Feb/March
^ Jan - Aug
+ Jan – Nov
~ Appointed to fill open term

On behalf of the Clark County Clean Water Commission, I approve the 2024 Annual Report to the Clark County Councilors.

Ted Gathe, 2024-25 CWC Chair

April 2, 2025
Dated

Clark County Clean Water Commission

2024 Annual Report

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Clark County Clean Water Commission

2024 Annual Report



Executive Summary

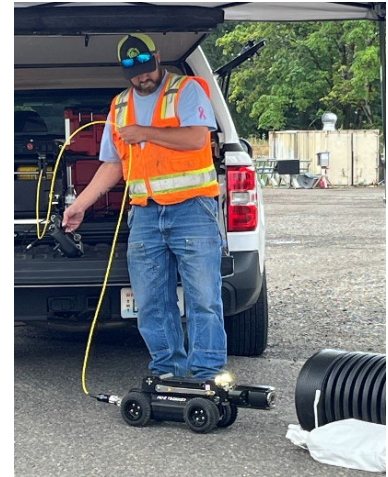
There was significant turn over on the Commission in 2024 so three new Commissioners were appointed, and one previous Commissioner was reappointed to serve on the Clean Water Commission (CWC). The Commission met for six regularly scheduled business meetings and three special meetings. The first special meeting was a new commissioner orientation in January. The second was a Clean Water division activities bus tour in July. The third special meeting was the symposium organized by the Commission and conducted by Commission and Clean Water Division staff directed at improved understanding and challenges surrounding the water quality issues in the Vancouver Lake Watershed.

The Clean Water Commission's 2024 areas of focus were:

1. Support the Clean Water Division's rate study process by providing feedback to staff and the Council. The Commission supported a significant increase in necessary funding to help ensure continued efforts to meet the Permit requirements as well as proactively improve watershed health and stormwater infrastructure management throughout Clark County.
2. Organizing and conducting the Vancouver Lake Symposium on October 17, 2024.
3. Continuing to learn about the new five-year NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Phase 1 permit requirements, the Clean Water Division responsibilities, and the findings from the Stream Health Report in order to better advise staff and the county leadership.
4. Instituting a discussion about updating the county code establishing the CWC and aligning the new code with the CWC's mission and strategic plan and incorporating the necessary language to accommodate the changes in the county government structure since the code's adoption in 1999.

- Continuing to develop ways to build upon existing partnerships related to maintaining and improving healthy watersheds in Clark County. Such efforts include stormwater management watershed education and finding innovative ways to address inclusivity and environmental justice.

This annual report details the mission, vision, and values, scheduled meeting topics, accomplishments, action plans, and recommendations for the upcoming year. The Clean Water Commission will continue to advise the Clean Water Division, County Manager and Clark County Council on watershed and stormwater management issues.



Clean Water Mission and Vision Statements

Mission

The Clean Water Commission's mission is to collaborate with Clark County residents, government entities, businesses, and non-profit organizations to enhance water quality, improve flow, and protect the ecological integrity of our watersheds.

Vision

A Clark County with self-sustaining and healthy watersheds that benefit the county's human communities, wildlife, and environment.

The members of the Clean Water Commission will in all actions and recommendations strive to achieve healthy watersheds throughout Clark County and to ensure the integrity of the water cycle, guided by best available science. The CWC recognizes the importance of the community's needs, recommending practical actions that are feasible within Clark County.

The Clean Water Commission seeks to cultivate a more informed community, recognizing that all Clark County surface waters that flow to the Columbia River derive from watersheds entirely contained within Clark County (with the exception of several healthy headwaters). Therefore, improving our local water quality and quantity management practices yield environmental benefits both locally across the County and downstream in the Columbia River.

Core Values

- Stewardship
- Cooperation
- Transparency

Meetings

The commission conducted hybrid (in-person and virtual) meetings in the Public Service Center Conference Room 698 and via TEAMS software. The Clean Water Commission's strategic plan helped guide the body and helped give framework for discussing stormwater impacts upon watershed health in Clark County. The 2024 meeting topics and action items are available on the [Clean Water Commission website](#) and in Appendix B. Overall, the meeting attendance was excellent with only a few of the commissioners having conflicts.

The public was encouraged to participate in the Clean Water Commission meetings in the following ways:

- Attend in person at the Public Service Center in Conference Room #698.
- Submit written comments to cleanwater@clark.wa.gov by noon the day of the meeting.
- Attend the meeting by calling (213) 262-7043 and then entering the meeting's access code.
- Attend virtually by clicking on the link that was provided on the website and the agendas.

This information was published on the county's website, on the meeting agendas, and in the meeting announcement which is published in the newspaper of record.

During the course of the year, only two public comments were received from individuals concerned about the issues occurring at Vancouver Lake. At the meeting they attended, the CWC and staff communicated the current and future efforts being made to address these concerns - including the October Vancouver Lake symposium. The fact that few public comments are received suggests that additional efforts are necessary to achieve the desired community involvement with the CWC in watershed issues. The Commission is committed to improving the level of public involvement with its activities.

Special Meetings

The commission held three special meetings in 2024. The first was a new commissioner orientation. Due to the turnover, there were two orientation meetings were conducted with Clean Water Division staff - although only one had the quorum requirements needed to qualify as a special meeting. The second special meeting was the July 30 Bus Tour with two members of Council, several members of county leadership and Clean Water Division staff. The third special meeting was Vancouver Lake Symposium organized by the Commission and the Clean Water Division staff. The details and proceeding of the symposium are available on the [Clean Water Commission website](#).



Community Involvement, Events, and Education

The Clean Water Commissioners strive to be active in the community through volunteering on local needs and on various environmentally focused and water quality boards, in community engagement and service events. Examples of their community involvement include volunteering at neighborhood associations, food banks, local schools, with veterans groups, and with organizations such as the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, Friends of Trees, the Vancouver Urban Tree Board, the Camas Earth Day Society, the Stream Team, Clark Conservation District, Backyard Habitat, Trout Unlimited, the Vancouver Lake Technical Advisory Group, the Friends of Vancouver Lake and Friends of Lacamas Lake, and providing lake water quality data. The commissioners are committed to increasing their knowledge of current stormwater best management practices through staff presentations, stakeholder workshops and professional development conferences.



John Chatel

2024 Accomplishments

The Clean Water Commission took the following actions:

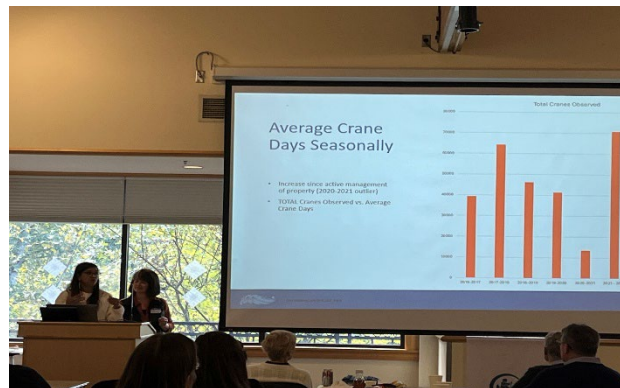
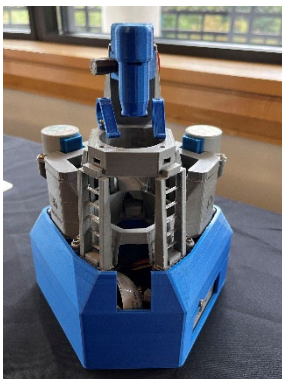
The Commission successfully appointed and onboarded five new Commissioners to replace members who stepped down during the year due to personal or professional conflicts. A new chair and vice chair were also elected in April when those positions became vacant unexpectedly.

In 2024, the Commission continued the practice of not having standing committees. They only had targeted work groups to address specific goals and emerging issues.

The Commission created a work group to organize and support the development of a symposium directed at water quality conditions and contributing factors in the Vancouver Lake. This subcommittee, the Commission as a whole and the Clean Water Division staff conducted this symposium on October 17, 2024, at the Vancouver Water Resource Center. Approximately 100 individuals participated in person and or online. The result has been an improved level of communication and cooperation among and between the various governmental, non-governmental agencies and organizations working to address the issues impacting the watershed and at Vancouver Lake.

The Clean Water Commission strongly supported the division's rate study increase to avoid the projected Clean Water Division's impending financial shortfall. Throughout the year-long process, the CWC provided feedback and recommendations to staff, the public, and county leadership on the levels of service. The Commission believes that additional future rate increases may be necessary to improve watershed health and stormwater management in Clark County for the benefit of the current and future residents, infrastructure and habitat and lessen the impacts of climate change

Additionally, the CWC continues to advocate for the County to focus policy, planning, and projects with a greater emphasis on achieving healthy watersheds. In the past, the focus has been specific project based and not using a wider lens towards impacts that many individual projects can have on the entire watershed. Keeping this in mind, the Clean Water Commission will continue to develop action plans to accompany the mission statement and align with Clean Water Division's priorities.



The Clean Water Commission has continued learning about the new NPDES Phase 1 permit requirements, the Clean Water Division responsibilities, and the findings from the Stream Health Report in order to better assist staff and the county leadership.

The Commission continues to explore how best to develop and build upon existing regional partnerships relating to stormwater and watershed health in Clark County. The Commission is also committed to continue to support public education and ongoing efforts to improve inclusivity and addressing environmental justice issues as related to Clark County watersheds.

Interviewed and recommended new commissioners for upcoming terms.

Presented 2023 Annual Report to Council on August 21, 2024.

Wrote letters of support for the Clean Water Rate Study fee and advocated for service levels which would better provide for needs of community and watershed health.

Ensured that all members received Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) training.

Reviewed and gave feedback to staff on the 2024 Stormwater Management Plan, 2024 Stream Health Report and the Clean Water 6-Year Capital Plan.

Wrote letters of support for various grant applications.



2024 Challenges

The CWC experienced significant turnover in 2024 in both leadership and membership. The Chair and Vice Chair resigned in February and there were three additional members who had to step down due to personal and professional commitments. The most senior member on the commission has served less than a full term and the commission lost momentum for one of their goals: the code update. This will be addressed when that portion of county code is fully updated as part of the county's routine process.

The Commission expects its members to actively engage in improving their understanding of the challenges facing county government regarding watershed health and storm water management throughout Clark County. To better inform the CWC on the Clean Water Division and its role in maintaining and enhancing watershed health, there have been staff presentations regarding education and community engagement, the Phase 1 NPDES Permit, the private stormwater facility inspection program, stream monitoring and assessment group's work which was highlighted in the Stream Health Report, the business pollution prevention program (local source control), and the 2025 six-year Clean Water capital plans. These presentations and collaborations are expected to continue. This requires a considerable commitment in time and effort for the CWC to maintain as a volunteer organization.

The CWC encourages proactive communication with the public at all levels. The CWC is striving to be more proactive and better informed in order to provide better advise to county staff and leadership. This also includes creating a greater and more diverse ability to reach more disproportionately impacted populations and focusing on the environmental justice aspects of its mission.

The Clean Water Commission would like to thank the Clark County Council for fully supporting the division's rate study increase in November 2024. This was a monumental achievement by staff to create such a comprehensive, well-conceived study and to formulate a well-conceived implementation plan for tiered alternatives. This was a monumental achievement by staff to create such a comprehensive. The CWC appreciates their commitment to communicate throughout the process. As we've noted over the years, the Clean Water Commission has been very concerned that the staffing levels have not kept up with the rapid increases of home and business growth in Clark County, as well as the sheer amount of infrastructure the Clean Water Division is required to build, map, inspect, and maintain. However, the Commission believes that future increases may be needed in order to continue to maintain NPDES Permit compliance, but also to proactively meet the needs of the area's watershed health and declining levels of service in its infrastructure.



2025 Clean Water Commission Action Plan and Recommendations

The Clean Water Commission has identified five primary focus areas to address in 2025 and adopted the following as their priorities:

1. Last year, the Clean Water Commission strongly supported the division's rate study increase and now the commission plans to advise the county through in the implementation process. The CWC's original purpose was this role of providing a public interface to county leadership and staff on the subject as well as providing this information to the residents of Clark County.
2. As a result of the Vancouver Lake and Lacamas Watershed Symposiums, the role of phosphates and nonpoint source pollution, were identified as significant issues. The CWC, in conjunction with the Clean Water Division, proposes to organize and conduct a symposium directed at these issues and not specifically associated with any watershed.
3. The CWC is interested in providing guidance on the new NPDES Permit Stormwater Management Action Plan (SMAP) requirement. There are a number of stormwater professionals who are able to provide valuable assistance and insight for this project.
4. The Clean Water Commission is concerned about the initial and cumulative effects that climate change will have on our communities and watersheds, as well as Clark County's resilience to these impacts upon local natural areas, wildlife, human populations, and infrastructure.
5. The Clean Water Commission is very interested in revitalizing their efforts into community engagement and inclusion. In addition to volunteering events. The commission is looking to provide more collaborative efforts with other governmental boards, non-governmental organizations, and advisory bodies, such as the City of Vancouver's Urban Forestry Commission, Clark Conservation District, and Clark County's Development and Engineering Advisory Board (DEAB).

Additionally, the CWC continues to advocate for the County to focus policy, planning, and projects with a greater emphasis on achieving healthy watersheds. In the past, the focus has been specific project based and not using a wider lens towards impacts many individual projects can have on the entire watershed. Keeping this in mind, the Clean Water Commission will continue to develop action plans to accompany the mission statement and align with Clean Water Division's priorities.



Summary

The Clean Water Commission continues to refine its role as a dedicated advisory board by creating targeted action plans and long-term goals, meeting with Clean Water staff on a regular basis to ensure that the board aligns its objectives to the Clean Water program priorities. The Commission is looking to identify new environmental justice partnerships while maintaining a proactive approach to maintaining and improving the condition of Clark County's important watershed resources.

Acknowledgements

The Clean Water Commission has had a successful year of member engagement. Members were active in the community and continued to educate themselves to better serve the public. County staff attendance at meetings was very informative and appreciated. The Commission would like to acknowledge and thank the Public Works and Clean Water staff for their continued help and support. In particular, we would like to acknowledge Devan Rostorfer and Alice Millward for their help and support throughout the year.



Emily Hess

Appendix A: Adopted Clean Water Commission Strategic Plan

Mission

"The Clean Water Commission's mission is to collaborate with Clark County residents, government entities, businesses, and non-profit organizations to enhance water quality, improve flow, and protect the ecological integrity of our watersheds.

Vision

"A Clark County with self-sustaining and healthy watersheds that benefit the county's human communities, wildlife, and environment."

Core Values

- Stewardship
- Cooperation
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SWOT Analysis

For this part, we are viewing this analysis as a note that reminds us of the opportunities and hurdles as we try to be more effective, when looking to bring on board members, and to guide our conversations and contributions.

Strength - Multi-disciplinary individuals who care, with public representation from the community and watersheds across the community.

Weakness - Limited meeting times, bureaucratic timelines and constraints, limited influence, and overall lack of public interest.

Opportunity - Raising public awareness, creating partnerships, support of funding opportunities, and providing advisory input to leadership.

Threat - Changing regulatory environment, lack of awareness, negative public opinion, and financial limitations.

Long Term Goals

We have used this more as a template to steer our focus and provide guidance towards our objectives of deliverable outcomes.

- Identify areas of need and promote collaboration in water quality programs for Clark County.
- Advance public outreach and serve as community liaisons on watershed quality issues and ecosystem impacts.
- Provide helpful advice to county leadership to improve and protect surface water and ecological health.
- Identify and support funding opportunities to promote healthy watersheds in Clark County.
- Advise staff on improving systems and programs to meet permit requirements and water quality goals in a functional and effective manner.

Yearly Objectives Guide

It is the Clean Water Commission's target to set yearly objectives in the first quarter to direct our energies and focus on the execution of our mission and long-term goals.

Appendix B: 2024 Clean Water Meeting Agendas

The Clean Water Commission held six regular business meeting and three regularly scheduled “special” meetings which focused on new Commissioner training, the July Bus Tour, and the October Vancouver Lake Symposium.

Regular meetings were held on: February 1 2024, April 3, 2024; June 5, 2024; August 7, 2024; October 9, 2024; and December 18, 2024.

Special meetings were held on: January 31, 2024; July 30, 2024; and October 17, 2024.

Attached are the above referenced meeting agendas.

