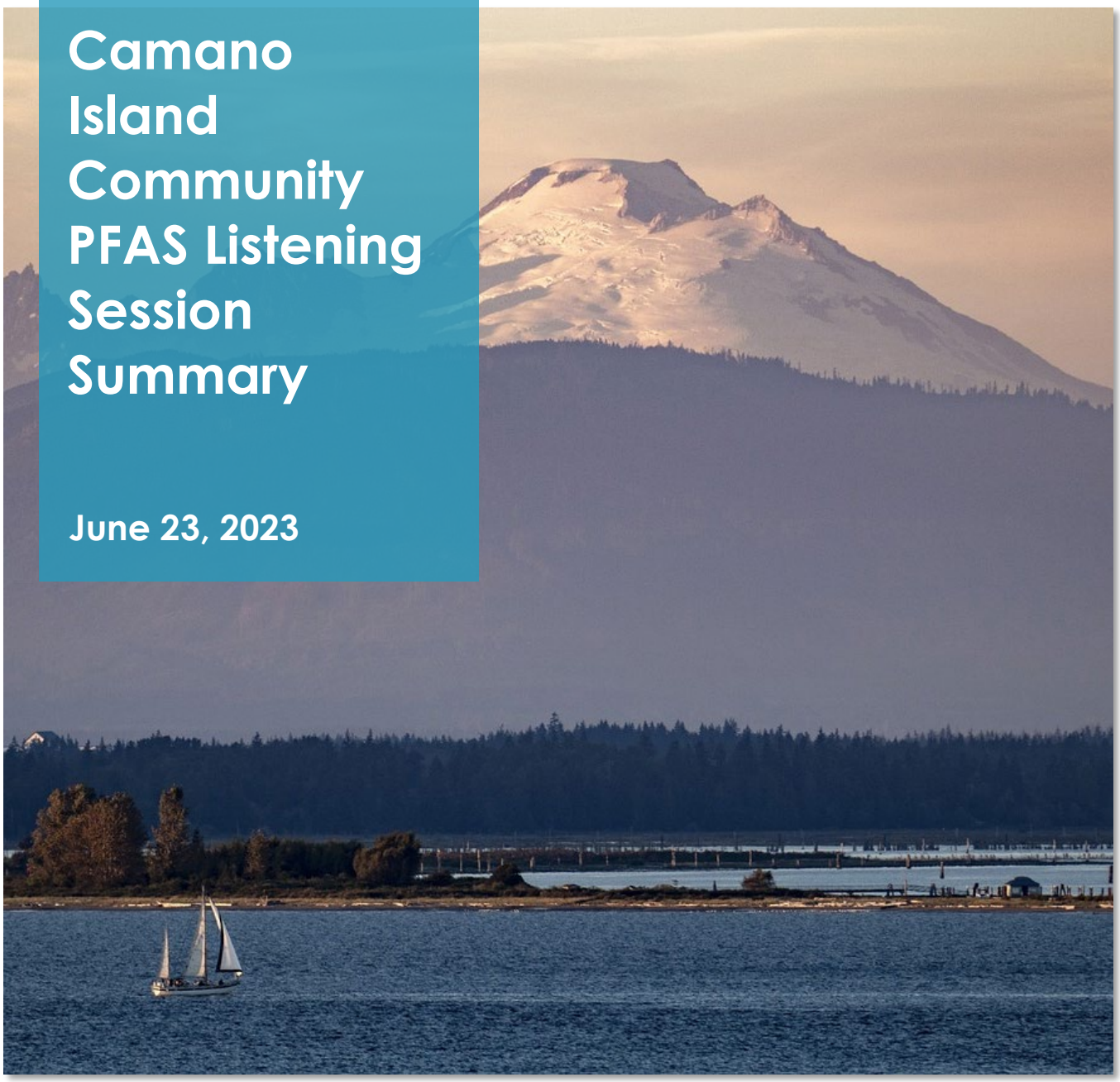
Camano Island Community PFAS Listening Session Summary

June 23, 2023



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This document was created by DOH to support the Camano Island/Mabana Shores community. The June 23 Camano Island Community PFAS Listening Session was a community-run event hosted by the Whidbey Island Water System Association, who invited DOH and other panelists to participate.

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Listening Session Overview

The Camano Island Community Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substance (PFAS) Listening Session was put on by the community-based organization, Whidbey Island Water System Association (WIWSA). The meeting was tailored to Mabana Shores residents and the surrounding community. John Lovie (Secretary, WIWSA) hosted the session. John invited Island County Public Health, Washington State Department of Health (DOH), and Washington State Department of Ecology (ECY) to be on the guest panel. The meeting was moderated by DOH to support the community. At WIWSA's request, DOH also ran a PFAS Basics Lesson before the listening session for community members who wanted to attend.

16 community members attended the meeting. Community members were notified that Mabana Shores was designated as a PFAS cleanup site by ECY two weeks before the listening session. Mabana Shores was designated as a site after their water system tested positive for PFAS.

The goals of the listening session were to:

1) Get to know local, state, and federal agency representatives working on PFAS issues on Camano Island and other places in Washington.
2) Talk about concerns, ask questions, and learn more about efforts to address PFAS, including how we (state agencies, local government agencies, and the community) can work together.
3) Connect with other community members impacted by PFAS in drinking water.
4) Receive up-to-date PFAS health education materials and resources.

The listening session questions were:

1) What questions do you have that are still unanswered?
2) What would you like to work on together going forward?
3) What else do you need us to know?

Health education materials on PFAS in drinking water were available for community members at the meeting.

Session Moderator and PFAS Basics Instructor

- Claire Nitsche (claire.nitsche@doh.wa.gov) – Health Educator, Office of Public Affairs and Equity, Washington State Department of Health

Guest Panel Representatives

Island County Public Health:

- Chris Kelley (c.kelley@islandcountywa.gov) – Hydrogeologist

Washington State Department of Health (DOH):

- Barbara Morrissey (barbara.morrissey@doh.wa.gov) – Toxicologist, Office of Environmental Public Health Sciences
- Derek Pell (derek.pell@doh.wa.gov) – Regional Manager, Northwest Regional Office, Office of Drinking Water

Washington State Department of Ecology (ECY):

- Kim Wooten (kim.wooten@ecy.wa.gov) – Program Manager, Toxics Cleanup Program, Northwest Regional Office

PFAS Basics Lesson Information

Several general questions were asked about PFAS chemicals and WA DOH's health advice during the PFAS basics lesson. For information about PFAS, their health impacts, and lowering exposure from drinking water, visit:

- DOH YouTube Channel PFAS Basics Video Playlist
  https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL82Z-swK0-4lg_TJzVodUCt3jOBzp3uUc

- DOH PFAS Webpage with Factsheets
  www.doh.wa.gov/pfas

Question 1: What questions do you have that are still unanswered?

Meeting attendees shared 15 questions with the panel during the listening session. Not all questions could be answered at the meeting. Questions that the panelists didn't have enough information or data to answer were written down so they could elevate those questions to the right people or agency.

See page 7 for a complete transcript of the question and answer session from the meeting.

Question 2: What would you like to work on together going forward?

Meeting attendees shared that they want better access to resources, better access to investigation and general PFAS information, and better communication. Specifically, attendees asked for the following.

1. **Financial help with well testing.**

   PFAS water tests for private wells cost between $400-$700 per test. Several meeting attendees with untested wells near the Mabana Shores water system, shared that this cost is a barrier. With financial assistance, they are more able to act on our advice to test nearby wells.

2. **A single website to find PFAS information from each agency (DOH, ECY, Island County Public Health).**

   Several meeting attendees shared that it's difficult to find information about PFAS when it is "scattered across so many different websites and parts of websites." Meeting attendees asked panelists for a single website that contains all the information they need to understand PFAS and get investigation updates.

   ECY made a site webpage for Mabana Shores and may serve as a central place to post all relevant information: https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/16779.

3. **Communications from panelists via email listservs and the local newspaper instead of mailers.**

   Meeting attendees shared that, because many Mabana Shores residents only live there part-time, print mailers are not the best way to reach them. They asked panelists to use an email listserv instead, or to announce meetings in the local paper, "The Crab Cracker."

   Email addresses were collected by WIWSA at the meeting.

4. **More access to PFAS product information and testing beyond drinking water.**

   Meeting attendees asked for:

   - Advice on how to identify products that may contain PFAS.
   - Advice on how to shop for PFAS-free products.
   - Advice on how to safely and responsibly use and dispose of PFAS-containing products.
   - Information and updates on shellfish testing.

   On July 1, 2023, the Safer Products Restrictions and Reporting rule went into effect. This rule requires manufacturers to restrict or report PFAS in aftermarket stain- and water-resistance treatments, carpets and rugs, and leather and textile furnishings. For more information, visit https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-toxic-chemicals/washingtons-toxics-in-products-laws/safer-products.

   State legislature also passed the Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act (House Bill 1047) in April 2023. This bill bans intentionally added PFAS in cosmetic products. It goes into effect January 2025. For more information on House Bill 1047 bill, visit https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?billnumber=1047&year=2023&initiative=False.

5. **A statewide database that shows private well and Group B test results.**

   Several meeting attendees told panelists that a statewide database showing private well and Group B PFAS test results would be helpful.

6. **A factsheet that details simple step-by-step instructions for private well owners.**

   This factsheet would cover:

   - How to know when to test.
   - What to do if your test comes back with PFAS levels higher than a SAL.
   - What assistance is available to help private well owners.

Question 3: What else do you need us to know?

Meeting attendees shared the following thoughts and concerns with agency guest panelists.

1. **The water system consumer report is hard to read/understand.**

   Several meeting attendees shared that King Water shares consumer reports about water testing and quality. However, these reports are very technical, which are making them hard to interpret. Because of this, several meeting attendees were not aware of the PFAS issue. They asked that panelists talk to King Water about including a cover-page that includes summaries and highights with a separate section for PFAS.

2. **Clarify what the term "remediation" means when using it in communications.**

   One meeting attendee pointed out that they have heard the term "remediation" used in different ways by panelists. They recommended panelists be more clear about what they mean when using the term.

Actions Agencies Are Taking Based On Community Feedback

Based on community feedback, agency guests from Island County Public Health, ECY and DOH are working on the following actions:

1. **DOH, ECY and Island County Public Health confirmed how private well owners can share PFAS test results with ECY and Island County Public Health.**

   All results received by ECY are a public record, and can't be kept confidential if we get a public records request. If you're okay with that, either send data to PFASNorthwest@ecy.wa.gov or submit to ERTS at https://ecology.wa.gov/footer-pages/report-an-environmental-issue.

   If you have questions about public records, reach out to ECY via email Kim Wooten at kim.wooten@ecy.wa.gov or 425-324-1658.

   To share your well test results with Island County, email the results to Chris Kelley at c.kelley@islandcountywa.gov.

   DOH is exploring options for adding private well results to the PFAS Water Testing Dashboard.

2. **DOH and ECY are exploring options for a digital newsletter with updates on the PFAS investigation.**

   One possible location for the updates is the Mabana Shores Ecology site webpage at https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/cleanupsearch/site/16779.

3. **Looking for ways to support communities break down barriers to purchasing water tests and water filters.**

   DOH has brand new funding called the Alternative Water Supply Grant that can help individual well owners and Group B water systems fund PFAS water testing and purchase of PFAS water filters. Some of the details are still being worked out, but counties can apply to DOH for eligible projects. Island County Public Health has not yet developed a proposal for funding through the Alternative Water Supply Grant.

4. **Developing new education materials about PFAS.**

   Topics include step-by-step actions for private well owners if they find PFAS, best practices for septic tanks, information on how to shop for PFAS free products, and how to best care for products that do contain PFAS.

   Some of this information is available at https://pfascentral.org/pfas-free-products/.

Questions and Answers

Q: Were the four chemicals that were found in Mabana Shores used in firefighting foams? There is a fire station less than a block away.

That's a great question. I'm (Barb Morrissey, DOH) not sure. The chemicals here don't fit the typical profile of the older firefighting foams that are suspected sources of PFAS at other sites in the state. The detected chemicals at Mabana Shores could be consistent with many different types of uses, like carpet cleaning or newer firefighting foams.

Q: There's a fire station near Mabana Shores. Are there detectable levels near the fire station?

We (ECY) don't know yet. We could test in that location if the fire station has their own well. In general, lots of fire stations have firefighting foam with PFAS in it but they don't use it very often. Firefighting foams with PFAS are only used for fuel fires, like car fires or airplane fires. They aren't used to fight house or brush fires.

Q: There is a fire training center near the Country Club. Training happens every week there. Could testing happen in that area? Can the fire departments be contacted?

Thanks for letting us know about this. We (ECY) will look into it. There is a takeback program in the works for fire departments to get rid of their old firefighting foams. We (ECY) are figuring out the best method of disposal.

Q: Are there records from the fire department for where they might have used the foam in the past? Records of specific types of calls for car fires, fuel fires?

We (ECY) are not aware of any formal record-keeping of this info. We have to rely on peoples' memories of when and where it was used.

Q: Are there PFAS in home fire extinguishers? What about those for oil fires?

Most home fire extinguishers use carbon dioxide or "dry chemical" ingredients to extinguish fires. These are unlikely to contain any PFAS. A good indicator that the fire extinquisher contains PFAS is if it mentions "fluorosurfactant," "fluoroprotein," "C6," or the use of "fluoro" in the ingredients. If you want to be sure, look at the brand and manufacturer of the foam and contact the manufacturer in writing to see if PFAS is used in its production.

Q: What does the next year look like for Dept. of Ecology with the MTCA process? What should we expect?

Once a site is listed, there is a gap between the listing and getting someone on site. How long that gap is depends on staffing and funding for investigation. Because of that, we (ECY) can't guarantee that anything will happen in the next year for Mabana Shores. If someone is going to come to your property to take samples, you will get notice first.

Q: How can we check home fire extinguishers for safety, PFAS, etc.? If they have PFAS, how/where should they dispose of these?

PFAS are not in standard home fire extinguishers. See answer above.

Q: Is there any restrictions on where carpet cleaning companies can dispose of the post-cleaning waste?

First you should know that the state recently banned sales of some carpet care products containing PFAS, including some of the products a carpet cleaning company might use. Though, the ban doesn't go into place until Jan 2025. This was part of a larger ban on PFAS in products marketed to treat leather, carpets, clothing, and other textiles to make them stain- and/or water-resistant. You can learn more at https://ecology.wa.gov/waste-toxics/reducing-toxic-chemicals/washingtons-toxics-in-products-laws/safer-products.

Claire called ECY's Hazardous Waste program to follow up on this question. This is what they shared:

All carpet disposal liquid must go in a sanitary sewer. It can never go in a storm drain or on the ground. There are no state or local restrictions yet on sending products with PFAS into a sanitary sewer. If the carpet disposal liquid has lots of fibers in it, it is filtered so that the fibers can be collected and thrown out. If it is known that the carpet being cleaned has hazardous waste in it, it has to be disposed of in a special way, like using a waste disposal service like Safety-Kleen. If you want to learn more, call ECY at 206-594-0000 and ask to be transferred to Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction.

Q: If you were living in Mabana Shores, what measures would you take at your house?

We (DOH) don't have official advice for you to take any action. None of the PFAS detected at Mabana shores drinking water supply are above current state or federal health advisories. In fact, we don't have state advisories for most of the PFAS detected in this water supply, nor are they covered in federal advisories. A few of these PFAS have recommended limits set by other states but the levels detected at Mabana shores are far below these recommended limits. In fact, we don't have a lot of health information on some of the PFAS detected in your water supply. We expect more health information to emerge in the coming years.

Taking action to remove PFAS here is a personal choice. For example, given the uncertainty, some people may sleep better if they install filters to remove these PFAS from the water. We have info on home water filters that work well to remove PFAS.

PFAS don't go through the skin very well, so focus on treating the water that you use for cooking and drinking. A point of use (POU) filter certified to reduce PFAS is a good option, and not too expensive.

Q: What if you have a refrigerator filter for water? Almost all our drinking water comes from fridge.

If you want to filter your water, there are refrigerator water filters that are NSF-certified to reduce PFAS. Check out our list of NSF-certified filters at https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-02/331-713_0.pdf.

Q: Are PFAS that were released in the 1960s still in our system? Is there a model that shows historical movement of PFAS chemicals through the aquifer?

Great question. Modeling like that is done all the time, but it takes a lot of sampling data to make a good model of how PFAS are moving in an area. It gets tricky when you have multiple release points, such as repeated fire training instead of one distinct spill or source location.

Q: Is remediation a given in this case? How would the decision be made?

Hard to say for sure at this point! Remediation, or cleanup of soil or groundwater, is likely to be needed somewhere related to this PFAS contamination. Until we (ECY) get more information – like more samples to show where contamination is and developed cleanup levels for more PFAS like the ones in the mix at Mabana – it's hard to say exactly how much remediation will be needed. Selecting the type of remediation used at a site, such as soil excavation, groundwater treatment, happens later in the cleanup process. Such as, after the investigation is finished and it's clear where all of the PFAS is located and how much is there.

Q: Does your investigation take into account recharge rates?

We (ECY) can include things like recharge rates when we evaluate a cleanup site, but for most sites we don't go that far because it takes a lot of data to make the model. Usually, we address that by using soil cleanup levels calculated to be protective in the case that the chemical gets into groundwater from the soil. We use some default chemical properties to come up with those numbers when we don't have a lot of information about a specific chemical. This is the case with PFAS chemicals. How they move in soil is still a place where the science is still being done to give us that info.

Q: What does remediation look like?

Remediation as treatment for safe drinking water could look like what was done at the City of Issaquah wells. They used granular activated carbon to take the PFAS out of the water.

Q: Is firefighting foam and major industrial use in the main source of PFAS in WA? What other sources?

So far, firefighting foam is the suspected main source of PFAS drinking water contamination in our state. However, that's also just one of the first places we've (ECY, DOH) started looking. In other states, PFAS sources have included metal and chrome plating factories, furniture makers, paper makers, and leather shoemakers. We (DOH, ECY) have a long way to go before we're able to determine the breakdown of sources here in Washington.


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