

Focus on:

West Point Treatment Plant's Permit Renewal



Figure 1 – A view of the West Point lighthouse from the south with Bainbridge Island in the background.

What is a water quality permit?

Water quality permits establish conditions that must be met so that the permit-holder can legally discharge wastewater and/or stormwater to waters of the state. Water quality permits are important tools to protect water quality. The permits include requirements necessary to ensure the discharge does not cause or contribute to water quality problems, consistent with state and federal laws.

The permit document contains requirements for the permittee, and the fact sheet describes the technical and regulatory basis for the permit. The draft permit is made available for public review. Ecology then considers all comments received and issues the final permit and fact sheet. A response to comments is included in the fact sheet.

How do I engage with the draft permit?

Learn more about the permit by attending a virtual public meeting and hearing on **May 9, 2023, at 6 p.m.** or **May 16, 2023, at 2 p.m.** You can provide verbal comments during these public hearings or submit a written comment by **June 5, 2023.**

Contact Information

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ADA accessibility

To request an accommodation, contact Ecology or visit: <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>.

For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.

Learn more about the public hearings and how to submit comments at: ecology.wa.gov/WestPoint-Renewal or scan the QR code below.



What is the West Point Treatment Plant?

King County owns and operates the largest wastewater collection and treatment system in Washington. The West Point Wastewater Treatment Plant (West Point), in Seattle's Magnolia neighborhood, was built in 1966 and significantly expanded in the 1990s. West Point treats sewage from homes and businesses, as well as industrial wastewater, collected mostly from within Seattle city limits. West Point discharges into Puget Sound approximately 2/3 of a mile offshore from the West Point Lighthouse at a depth of 240 feet.

West Point also receives stormwater from part of Seattle because the sewage and stormwater infrastructure is combined. When operating at full capacity during storm events, West Point discharges roughly one Olympic-sized swimming pool of water every two minutes.

What is included in the draft permit?

The draft West Point permit includes limits on pollutants, requirements for monitoring discharge quality, testing toxicity, sampling sediments, reporting, recordkeeping, as well as operations and

maintenance of facilities. The draft permit also contains conditions for King County’s industrial wastewater pretreatment program to control these sources, as well as minimum control requirements for combined sewer overflows.

Other important protections include:

Limits for West Point and CSO Treatment Plants

We are reducing the amount of chlorine King County is allowed to discharge from its CSO treatment plants. There are also restrictions on the amount of copper and zinc allowed from two CSO treatment plants.

PFAS Monitoring and Source Control

Ecology and the Washington Department of Health are working to minimize the public’s exposure to [PFAS](#)¹ — a widely-used class of chemicals that don’t break down naturally in the environment. The draft permit supports these efforts by requiring:

- (1) Monitoring for PFAS in the wastewater it treats
- (2) Identifying the industries that may discharge PFAS to their treatment plants
- (3) Working with those industries to control this source of pollution.

Control Pollutants Discharged through CSOs

We are requiring King County implement best management practices to identify and control sources of pollutants to stormwater in the combined system as part of a CSO pollution prevention program.

Redesign of Elliott West CSO Treatment Plant

The Elliott West CSO treatment plant has not regularly met limits on its discharge since it began operating in 2005. Ecology required King County to conduct two studies to better understand this problem. The County determined that the facility requires major upgrades to achieve compliance with its effluent limits and to protect water quality. The draft permit proposes a schedule King County must follow to redesign and rebuild the facility.

¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Waste-Toxics/Reducing-toxic-chemicals/Addressing-priority-toxic-chemicals/PFAS>

What is a combined sewer system?

Combined sewer systems² capture domestic sewage, pre-treated industrial wastewater discharges, and stormwater runoff into a common pipe for conveyance to a wastewater treatment plant. Communities built combined sewer systems in the early 1900s to 1950s as a simple way to discharge wastewater while preventing flooding and property damage from stormwater or sewage backups.

While new combined systems are no longer allowed, some communities like Seattle have a large network of existing combined system infrastructure. During heavy rain events, flows through the combined sewer system dramatically increase and untreated sewage flow occasionally diverts directly into the environment at specific locations called “combined sewer overflow” (CSO) outfalls. King County’s combined collection system has 38 of these outfalls.

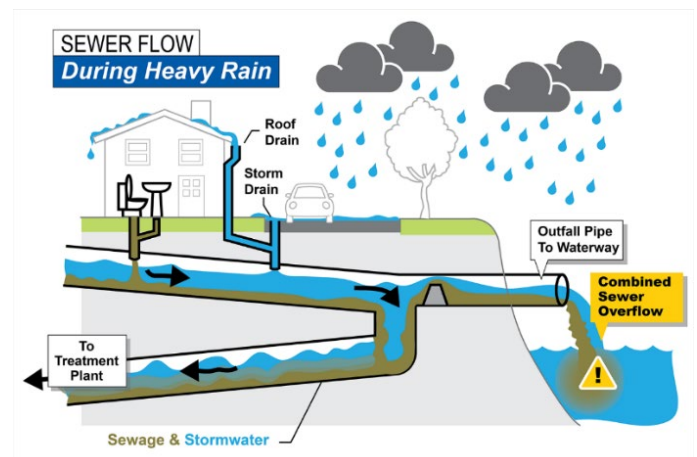


Figure 2 - A diagram of flows withing a combined sewer system during heavy rain. [Source: Seattle Public Utilities]

To help reduce the quantity of untreated wastewater leaving CSOs during heavy rain events, King County operates five specialized CSO treatment plants that treat combined sewage before discharging to surface waters. These plants typically operate a few times a year, usually during the winter months.

² <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Permits-certifications/Combined-Sewer-Overflows>