

## STAFF REPORT

**DATE:** January 6, 2021

**TO:** Pierce County Planning Commission

**FROM:** Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

**BY:** Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

**SUBJECT:** **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 939884**  
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments to protect water quality in the Lake Tapps Reservoir.  
Applicant: Cascade Water Alliance

**NOTICE:** Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

**SEPA:** SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

**ATTACHMENT:** Attachment A – Proposed Amendments

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Cascade Water Alliance proposes new policies to protect water quality in the Lake Tapps Reservoir through cooperation and collaboration with Pierce County, implementation of the [White River Basin Plan](#)'s recommendations regarding the Lake Tapps Reservoir, and other measures.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Refer to **Attachment A**. Only those portions that are proposed to be amended or necessary for context are shown.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposed amendment for the following reasons:

- consistent with the County's previously-adopted goals and policies addressing water quality in general; and
- provides a more detailed framework to advance the implementation of those existing goals and policies to protect water quality in the Lake Tapps Reservoir specifically.

## IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

If the proposal is adopted, the Lake Tapps Management Plan would need to be developed.

## IMPACT ANALYSIS

*Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan*, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.  
Not applicable.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.  
Not applicable.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.  
Not applicable.
4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.  
The proposal supports existing policy to protect aquifers and surface waters while improving the quality of surface and groundwaters.
5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.  
Not applicable.
6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.  
Not applicable.
7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.  
The proposal is consistent with the GMA, Multicounty Planning Policies, the Countywide Planning Policies, and the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan that support water quality protection and stormwater management methods.
8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.  
The proposal would develop a plan that would address potential future Lake Tapps water quality problems through coordination with the Cascade Water Alliance and other stakeholders.
9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.  
Not applicable.
10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.  
This proposal is consistent with the recommendations from the White River Basin Plan ([Ordinance No. 2013-61](#)). The Plan includes recommendations including programmatic measures to protect and improve water quality at Lake Tapps, including:
  - Lakes Water Quality Management Program
  - Coordinate with the Cascade Water Alliance on developing a Lake Tapps Water Quality Monitoring Plan

*Applicable RCWs/Policies*

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)**

**RCW 36.70A.070:** The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

**RCW 36.70A.020(10):** Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

**MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)**

**Environment Goal:** The region cares for the natural environment by protecting and restoring natural systems, conserving habitat, improving water quality, and reducing air pollutants. The health of all residents and the economy is connected to the health of the environment. Planning at all levels considers the impacts of land use, development, and transportation on the ecosystem.

**Environmental Policies**

- MPP-En-3** Maintain and, where possible, improve air and water quality, soils, and natural systems to ensure the health and well-being of people, animals, and plants. Reduce the impacts of transportation on air and water quality and climate change.
- MPP-En-10** Support and incentivize environmental stewardship on private and public lands to protect and enhance habitat, water quality, and other ecosystem services, including protection of watersheds and wellhead areas that are sources of the region’s drinking water supplies.
- MPP-En-17** Maintain and restore natural hydrological functions and water quality within the region's ecosystems and watersheds to recover the health of Puget Sound.

**PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPS)**

**Natural Resources, Open Space, Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Lands & Environment (page 54)**

- Env-16** The County, and each municipality in the County, should protect and enhance the natural ecosystems through comprehensive plan policies and development regulations that reflect natural constraints and protect sensitive features.
  - 16.4** Maintain natural hydrological functions, ecosystems and watersheds and, where feasible, restore to a more natural state.
  - 16.5** Restore, where appropriate and possible, freshwater and marine shorelines, watersheds, and estuaries to a natural condition for ecological function and value.

## **Coordination of Watershed Planning and Land Use Planning (page 55)**

**Env-18** The County, and each municipality in the County, should protect the natural habitat critical for the conservation of salmonid species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, whenever practicable, through the use of planning activities or study techniques that are capable of determining changes in stream hydrology and water quality.

**18.1** The County, and each municipality in the County, should coordinate watershed planning and land use planning activities and implementation activities within a watershed boundary including:

**18.1.1** recognize that watershed planning may be useful in analyzing changes in stream hydrology, flooding, water quality and capital facilities under different land use scenarios;

**18.1.2** evaluate the use of vegetation retention, tree conservation, and maximum impervious surface standards;

**18.1.3** whenever possible, utilize watershed boundaries instead of jurisdictional boundaries for plans and studies;

**18.1.4** consider the implications of planning and implementation activities on natural environmental and built systems that are located outside jurisdictional boundaries but within the shared watershed;

**18.1.5** when updating land use plans and regulations, consider information that is contained within watershed plans.

## **Inter-jurisdictional Cooperation (page 55)**

**Env-19.** The County, and each municipality in the County, shall work together to identify and protect natural habitat corridors that cross jurisdictional boundaries.

**19.2** Whenever possible, utilize watershed boundaries instead of jurisdictional boundaries for plans and studies.

**Env-20.** The County, and each municipality in the County, should coordinate watershed/aquatic restoration planning and implementation activities within a watershed.

## **PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **Land Use Element (page 2-61)**

**GOAL LU-81** Conserve rural resources.

**LU-81.4** Preserve the land and water required by natural resource based activities, including the protection of critical areas, natural wildlife, rural lifestyles, outdoor recreation, and other open spaces and protect air and water quality and availability.

### **Environment Element (starting on page 7-4)**

**GOAL ENV-5** Protect aquifers and surface waters to ensure that water quality and quantity are maintained or improved.

**ENV-5.1** Ensure coordination among all appropriate County departments and other agencies in the review and analysis of water quality.

**ENV-5.4** Manage and plan water resources on a watershed basis.

**ENV-5.5** Develop standards for activities that may adversely impact water quality or quantity in aquifers, watersheds, and surface waters, consistent with state and federal laws.

**GOAL ENV-9** Maintain and where necessary improve terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems so that they maintain viable, reproducing populations of plants and animals.

**ENV-9.1** Implement the recommendation of the watershed action plans as adopted by County Council.

**Utilities Element (starting on page 13-13)**

**GOAL U-24** Protect the quality of groundwater used for domestic water supplies.

**U-24.1** Protect the quality of groundwater and minimize damage from flooding by implementing an effective surface water management program.

**GOAL U-32** Improve surface water and groundwater quality.

**U-32.1** Address water quality in stormwater facility maintenance and capital improvement projects.

**U-32.2** Reduce and eventually eliminate harm to water quality from stormwater discharges. Do this through use of on-site infiltration and best management practices and source control of pollutants; control of development density and location; preservation of stream corridors, wetlands and buffers; and development, maintenance of a system of stormwater retention and detention facilities, and retrofit of existing facilities to eliminate or reduce untreated stormwater flows.

**GOAL U-33** Establish and adopt ways to solve existing surface water problems and prevent future problems.

**U-33.4** Use basin planning as a strategy for achieving federal and state water quality standards.

**U-33.5** Use basin plans to identify modifications to land use designations and development regulations that will protect water quality and riparian habitat, and to alleviate flooding problems.

**GOAL U-34** Coordinate the basin planning process with the community planning process to address surface water runoff, flooding issues, and future capital improvement projects.

**GOAL U-36** Coordinate with public and private sectors to ensure cost-effective stormwater management, flood risk reduction measures, and equitable distribution of costs.

## PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

### Environment Element (page 7-4)

**GOAL ENV-5** Protect aquifers and surface waters to ensure that water quality and quantity are maintained or improved.

**ENV-5.4** Manage and plan water resources on a watershed basis.

**ENV-5.4.1** Lakes identified as a drinking water source should be protected through the development of a lake management plan to address identified impairments of the drinking water source.

**ENV-5.4.1.1** Work with Cascade Water Alliance to (1) begin implementation of the Lower White River Basin Plan's recommendations regarding the Lake Tapps Reservoir, starting with a pilot program targeting phosphorus in the Lake Tapps Reservoir; and (2) ensure that long-term support and funding for implementing the Plan's recommendations are sufficient to be successful.

### Utilities Element (page 13-16)

**GOAL U-32** Improve surface water and groundwater quality.

**U-32.1** Address water quality in stormwater facility maintenance and capital improvement projects. Plan for and manage stormwater on a watershed basis, by basin or sub-basin, consistent with policies addressing water quality and coordination of regional stormwater management efforts, including policies ENV-5.4, 5.4.1, 5.4.1.1, 5.5 and U-36.