

Annual Lake Whatcom Joint Councils and Commissioners meeting scheduled for Wednesday April 22 at 6:30 p.m.

The Lake Whatcom Management Program invites the public to attend the annual Lake Whatcom Joint Councils and Commissioners meeting on Wednesday, April 22, in the Bellingham City Council Chambers, 210 Lottie Street. Staff will be available at an information open house outside the Chambers from 6 to 6:30 p.m. The meeting of the joint Councils/Commissioners will start at 6:30 p.m., and will be aired on BTV10.

This meeting brings together the Whatcom County Council, the Bellingham City Council, and the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District Commission to discuss efforts to improve water quality in Lake Whatcom, the drinking water source for over half of Whatcom County residents.

The three jurisdictions have worked together since 1992 to coordinate work to improve the health of the lake. At this meeting, legislators will review the Lake Whatcom Management Program 2015-2019 Work Plan, which will serve as a blueprint for the remainder of this decade for managing the watershed and improving its water quality. Important Work Plan activities for the next five years include a redesign and expansion of the homeowner water quality improvement program; support for watershed-friendly recreational opportunities at an 8000 + acre park to be developed by the County; and, further refinements to the program to prevent aquatic invasive species from entering the lake. The Plan also outlines the education and outreach activities needed to explain and build support for the wide variety of programs.

The Plan details proposed capital projects to prevent water quality and quantity impacts associated with stormwater runoff. Portions of the Plan will be the basis for the development of the program's response to the state Department of Ecology Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements for phosphorus and fecal coliform reduction. A principal concern is excess phosphorus from the surrounding watershed that accelerates algal growth, reducing lake oxygen and affecting water clarity. Algal blooms burden operation of the City of Bellingham's water treatment plant. In addition, some of the creeks flowing into the lake have excessive levels of fecal coliform, representing a direct human health hazard.

At this meeting members of the three legislative bodies will consider a joint resolution to adopt the 2015-2019 Plan. The legislators will also receive a briefing on the 2010-2014 Lake Whatcom Management Program Accomplishments Report. An opportunity will be provided at the meeting for public comment.

For more information contact Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District General Manager Patrick Sorensen at (360)734-9224 or patrick.sorensen@lwwsd.org