

Lake Tapps | planning together for tomorrow



**Cascade Water Alliance Lake Tapps Management Plan
Community Forum Summary
North Tapps Middle School
January 13, 2011**

Project background

Cascade Water Alliance (Cascade), Pierce County, nearby cities and other governmental entities that have authority regarding Lake Tapps are currently convening a public process to work collaboratively with the community to develop a management plan for the lake. The public process began in November 2010 with a Lake Tapps Management Plan survey that served as the community's first opportunity to submit input and feedback concerning how the Lake Tapps community issues should be managed. More than 300 people completed the survey.

Meeting purpose

The purpose of the community forum was to share the community process with agency representatives and community stakeholders on and around Lake Tapps. The forum also served as a venue for soliciting feedback from the community concerning what should be included in the management plan. Feedback from the community forum and results from the survey will be used to inform the framework and contents of the management plan.

The community forum covered the following information:

- Public process
- Roles and responsibilities on Lake Tapps
- Results of the recent Lake Tapps Management Survey
- Current issues on and around Lake Tapps
- Topics to address in the Lake Tapps Management Plan
- Proposed strategies for day-to-day and long-term management

Welcome and introductions

Penny Mabie, EnviroIssues, welcomed the group, explained the public process and the purpose of the community forum, and led a round of introductions.

Lloyd Warren, Cascade Water Alliance Board Chair, thanked attendees on behalf of the Board for participating in the forum. He said Cascade Water Alliance has been the owner of the lake for only one year and has since been able to ensure that all agreements are in place with tribes, homeowners and the four cities surrounding the lake (Auburn, Bonney Lake, Buckley and Sumner). In addition, Cascade recently acquired the water rights to operate the lake and ultimately take water out for supply purposes in the future.

Lloyd said Cascade learned a lot last summer in terms of understanding the various roles and responsibilities in and around Lake Tapps. Lloyd said Cascade is participating in this public process to involve all stakeholders in developing a plan that will help guide the future operation and management of Lake Tapps.

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Pat McCarthy, Pierce County Executive, said she is pleased to be involved in this discussion. She knows the community has a lot of great ideas in terms of how to solve some of the county's problems. Pat said Pierce County is the second largest county in the State and includes rural, suburban and urban areas, which creates a number of unique operational and financial challenges.

Pat said Pierce County communities most importantly value public safety, roads and parks, and the county works hard to protect those values and continually improve the quality of life for its residents.

Sergeant Roger Toles, Pierce County Sheriff's Department, said there are a lot of law enforcement issues in and around Lake Tapps for which the Pierce County Sheriff's Detachments are responsible. The Marine Unit is responsible for on-water issues. On-land officers are not a part of this unit and do not have the proper training or access to boats to enforce rules and regulations on the water.

Sergeant Toles said the parks around Lake Tapps have a lot of people recreating inside them, particularly Lake Tapps Park, which can see anywhere from 800 to 2,000 visitors on a hot summer day. This poses a large challenge for enforcement officers because there are only approximately 200 vehicle and 100 boat parking spots available. Due to limited space, officers must close the parking lot, forcing all other visitors to park on busy arterials or residential side streets, which creates safety and driving challenges.

Sergeant Toles noted that dike usage is another issue about which Pierce County frequently receives complaints. Complaints include kids often using the dikes as a place to party; however, since the dikes are located on private property, enforcement can be challenging. The Pierce County Sheriff's Department has been working with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and Cascade to try and resolve these issues to possibly allow users to continue recreating on the dikes but in a safer manner.

Last year was one of the slowest years the Sheriff's Department has had in terms of volume of complaints. The Department is proud that they have been able to improve cove issues over the last year by lowering noise levels and increasing safety.

Sergeant Toles explained that State funding was cut by approximately 50% for the 2011-2012 fiscal year which has forced the Department to remove one boat from the Marine Unit and cut hours for on-water enforcement officers. The state of the economy is making the department reevaluate its priorities and some resources will need to be cut.

Elected officials and staff from many jurisdictions and organizations around the lake introduced themselves and their roles. See attached list of speakers on page 6 and 7.

Lake issues and management strategies discussion

Penny reviewed the top line survey results regarding issues of importance around the lake.

Top issues identified by survey takers were:

1. Water quality
2. Lake level
3. Safety

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4. Boat speed
5. Public access

Penny then asked attendees to identify other issues of concern.

Other issues identified by attendees were:

- Boat noise (engines, music, stereos, people)
- Enforcement
- Regulating boat size and size of the wake
- Parking
- Education for lake users and residents
- Maintaining property values and property owner rights
- Quality of life
- Fishing
- Pedestrian safety
- Alcohol consumption and partying
- Growth management and shoreline damage
- User enjoyment – making sure issues are managed in such a way that ensures people’s right to enjoy the lake is upheld
- Animal and habitat control including geese, nutria, eagles and osprey
- Stumps and stump removal
- Tacoma Point is a gathering place for fireworks and encourages trespassing on private property
- Property owners not belonging to a Home Owners Association (HOA) often have less of a voice than those that do belong to an HOA
- Water level – those with low dock levels suffer when the water level is too high

Penny then reviewed the key issues survey takers identified that should be addressed in the Lake Management Plan.

Top issues to address in the plan identified by survey takers:

1. Lake level
2. Water quality
3. Safety
4. Noise
5. Milfoil, weed and algae control
6. Boat speed and number
7. Public parks, usage and access

Penny asked attendees to identify other issues and topics to address in the plan.

Other issues and topics attendees felt should be addressed in the plan included:

- Enforcement
- List of groups who manage certain aspects of the lake
- List of what happens in and around the lake

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- Inventory of resources, current status and conditions
- Contact information
- Roles and responsibilities
- The issues
- Long and short term planning of for the lake
- Fees and funding
- Implementation
- Wildlife protection
- Preservation of character
- Preservation of property values
- Use categories
- Education
- Existing regulations
- Milfoil, weed and algae control
- A strategy for revisiting the plan in the future to assess its success and make necessary revisions
- Maintenance and operations of the lake

Penny then led the attendees in a discussion of potential day-to-day strategies (safety, operations and use) and long-term strategies (planning and permitting) to address the many issues identified by the survey and attendees.

Management strategies suggested by attendees were:

- Use of volunteer corps to assist in enforcing rules and regulations and increase the number of eyes on the lake
- Use of volunteer corps to assist in water sampling
- Involve all users in fees discussions
- Get more clubs involved, i.e. bass and fishing clubs that check milfoil levels often and monitor exotic species
- Implement an annual use fee
- Clearly identify who is responsible for shoreline management
- Designate a single community representative to be present at Cascade Water Alliance Board meetings (non-voting)
- Create and/or enforce a noise ordinance that is consistent across the entire lake
- Ensure consistency between regulating bodies to prevent problems from moving from one area of the lake to another
- Try not to duplicate efforts – know what rules and regulations exist before writing new ones
- Make the plan as realistic and reasonable as possible
- Use more lifeguards to prevent drowning
- Install signage warning users about the dangers of swimming
- Publish either the final management plan or develop an information guide and distribute it to every household
- Include contact information in the final plan so people know who to call for specific issues
- Implement day fees for people walking into the parks to help fund enforcement

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- Develop a list of lessons learned using other management plans that have already been developed
- Include broad representation in the working groups (i.e. age, demographic, locations, etc.) to ensure the plan is not biased
- Limit the number of boats on Lake Tapps
- Develop a growth management strategy or access control to prevent overpopulation on and around Lake Tapps
- Build a relationship with North Tapps Middle School to allow overflow parking on hot, sunny days
- Provide new access points to the lake by tying into existing trails, such as the Fennel Creek trail or the Buckley Flume trail
- Get an easement from Cascade Water Alliance to allow parking on the dike adjacent to Pierce County Park
- Build an environmentally sound fueling facility at the park that could help accrue funding
- Dieringer School District might have some property that could be turned into public access space
- Create a board for enforcement; someone that could straddle all jurisdictions and areas
- Clearly mark stumps and shallow points near the islands
- Create another way to get off the plateau by building a road along the north side of the lake
- Don't cut the grass on the dikes until September to discourage people from using it

Penny facilitated a general comment/question period, and assured attendees that all comments and questions would be recorded. She noted the elected officials and staff present were primarily tasked with listening, not answering questions.

Q: Is there a Lake Tapps annual pass available for purchase?

A: Those that live within Bonney Lake city limits are able to purchase a pass to use boat launches but there is not an annual pass available for non-residents.

Q: Were the tribes invited to participate?

A: Tribes were informed of the meeting but not invited to attend because they do not have a direct role or responsibility around the lake.

Q: Will end users of the water be involved with fees?

A: Fees will likely be an all-inclusive discussion.

Q: Cascade owns the lake but who owns the water since it is public property?

A: Pierce County owns the water.

Q: Is there a simplified version of all the requirements and conditions in all the ownership agreements signed available on Cascade's web site?

A: Yes, www.cascadewater.org.

Q: Why does Cascade think they need to develop a plan?

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A: After owning the lake for one very busy summer, Cascade realized how large of a demand there is for access and use of the lake. In addition, there were a number of issues surrounding the lake that communities were looking to Cascade Water Alliance to solve. Since not all of the issues concerning Lake Tapps are Cascade's responsibility and the organization was not comfortable making unilateral decisions, the Cascade Board decided to develop a management plan that would outline roles and responsibilities and foster a collaborative relationship between owner, users and enforcers.

Comments

- Traffic on the Lakeland Hills connector road is being used as a cut through and pouring traffic on to small arterials.
- Overflow parking around the entrance to Pierce County Park on N Tapps Highway creates a serious pedestrian hazard and does not allow law enforcement officers to make efficient use of their time.
- Focus law enforcement on critical issues as opposed to minor issues such as parking tickets.
- Issues with Lake Tapps are mostly peripheral and are happening around the lake so it is important for all users, not just homeowners to be involved in this process.
- Sheriff presence on the lake has had a very positive impact and maintaining that presence is important.
- It is nice to see that Cascade, as the owners of the lake, are stepping up to the plate and coming out early to work with home owners and users to ensure the lake continues to be a safe, healthy and enjoyable place for all.
- Every person who uses the lake can help keep it healthy and clean.

Next steps

Once the framework has been developed, Cascade will convene a small working group composed of community, government and Home Owners Association representatives to come up with a draft plan. This part of the process will remain transparent and collaborative. On March 16, Cascade will bring the draft plan to the community for final input and finalize the plan before spring 2011.

Closing remarks

Pat McCarthy noted that there are two perspectives concerning how the lake should be managed – those who live on the lake and those who use the lake for recreation only. She reminded the group that as this process continues to remember that Pierce County and the other cities involved do not have deep enough pockets to solve all the issues on the table. Pat said the partnership between home owners, users and the various jurisdictions will become increasingly more important.

Attendance

Community members

- Approximately 55 people attended and participated in the community forum

Cascade Water Alliance

- Lloyd Warren, Board Chair
- John Marchione, Board Vice Chair
- John Ault, Board Director
- Penny Sweet, Board Director
- Chuck Clarke, CEO

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- Elaine Kraft, Intergovernmental and Communications Director
- Joe Mickelson, Lake Tapps Operations Manager

Pierce County

- Pat McCarthy, Pierce County Executive
- Dan Roach, Pierce County Council
- Sgt. Roger Toles, Pierce County Sheriff's Office
- Kathy Kravit-Smith, Pierce County Parks

City of Auburn

- Peter Lewis, City of Auburn Mayor

City of Bonney Lake

- Neil Johnson, City of Bonney Lake Mayor

City of Sumner

- Dave Enslow, City of Sumner Mayor

Others

- Jerry Thorson, East Pierce Fire and Rescue
- Karlyne McGinnis, East Pierce Fire and Rescue
- Rick Kuss, East Pierce Fire and Rescue
- Stan Laatsch, Valley Regional Fire Authority

EnviroIssues

- Penny Mabie, Public Process Convener
- Chelsey Funis, Project Coordinator

Mayor Pat Johnson, City of Buckley was unable to attend, but sent her regards and her assurance that she is following the process closely.