

AGENDA - DRAFT

- Explain zoom ground rules
 - Select a Chair
 - Review agenda
 - Public comment on agenda
 - Finalize agenda
 - Roundtable on our backgrounds and set goals
 - Review past public comments
 - Develop a work plan for the next month, and make assignments
 - Public comments on meeting and next steps
 - Set next meeting
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A few comments based on my professional experience:

- Water issues touch on many areas, including fish and other water life, domestic use, agricultural use, drought and flooding
 - Many State agencies have authorities related to water, including the State Departments of Ecology, Health, and Fish and Wildlife.
 - Clallam County Tribes have treaty rights to fish, which are strongly dependent on water. They take water decisions that affect their treaty rights very seriously. They may only want to deal directly with State Government in a government-to-government relationship, and not with County government or utilities.
 - As a result, County authorities over water are limited. However, they touch on several areas:
 - DCD manages County development which depends on water availability. The Herst and Foster decisions provided requirement for Counties to determine water availability or limit its availability. Their website shows “Natural Resources management” and “Shoreline Master Program”, which relate to water. Also Clallam Streamkeepers, who do water quality monitoring are housed under the DCD.
 - Environmental Health addresses water supply issues for small systems (individual wells or “Group B” systems). They also regulate on-site septic systems, that affect groundwater.
 - Public Works needs to address stormwater quality and impacts on salmon streams with their projects.
 - Counties are often involved with watershed planning, which I heard the County Commissioners mention. I’m not sure if there is any current activity in this area.
 - For all these reasons, we should do our research first, before moving forward with any specific proposals.

Suggestions for interviews we might consider:

 - Bruce Emery, DCD
 - The County Environmental Health Director
 - Dept of Ecology Water Resources Program
 - Water staff from the local Tribes
 - Bowen Kendrick, Clallam PUD water manager (It might be useful to look into the Carlsborg water right permit situation.)
 - Others?...
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Public Comments about Water

Craig Smith:

We represent the Peninsula Community Action Group, consisting of over 650 members residing in the Sequim, Sequim Bay, Carlsborg and the Dungeness Valley areas. Our numbers, rapidly growing, have water resource monitoring and utilization as one of our major concerns.

We understand that the Charter Review Commission (CRC) is considering which topics to pursue for recommendation to Clallam County, and we feel very strongly that the CRC should consider the establishment of a Water Coordinator/Master to oversee all water related issues involving the Clallam County water basins.

We are concerned that multiple agencies, often with conflicts of interest, tap the same aquifers without appropriate monitoring (or agency crosstalk); attempting to manage and utilize a precious resource that we can all see rapidly diminishing as our snowpack diminishes. Water "rights" do not appear to represent water presence, and we want better stewardship of this precious asset. If the CRC pursues this topic as a recommendation to the County, our group will provide strong support.

We are asking that you present this request as an addition to the agenda at the beginning of your meeting.

Thank you.

Nina Sarmiento:

My desire to create opportunities for long term water resource protection is based around a context of the global climate crisis and the current trends here in the county of both increased water need and decreased availability (during summer months). I don't want to recommend changes to the charter that are dramatic or costly but that in small parts lead to more sustainability of the resource.

Sequim is building 1000 new homes this year and I would love to hear someone brief on the sustainability of their water resource, specifically are they on track to provide water to residents even with inevitable future climate driven droughts? The new reservoir project aims to secure water resources but at a very high cost. Are there other less costly ways to begin securing water into the summer months for the long term? I believe there is. Port Angeles also facing population growth and water shortages in late August and September. Water taken out of the Elwha river directly competes with water needed for migrating salmon. By facing the reality of a diminishing water supply we can align our vision to make changes.

Two articles below show some dramatic consequences related to drought in Ecuador and Colombia. I was in Bogota this winter and in my hotel I experienced water rationing. Notices were posted for when the water would be shut off encouraging people to shower beforehand and there were buckets of water stored for washing dishes, flushing toilets, washing hands etc until the water returned. It is important to take examples from other countries or at least put ourselves in their shoes, imagining the inconvenience of having to ration water. In panama they are actively protecting forests and reforesting to maintain water levels in the panama canal.

colombia: <https://archive.ph/ZpYpN>

ecuador: <https://web.archive.org/web/20250128080302/https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/30/world/americas/ecuador-hydropower-drought.html>

Panama: <https://www.dw.com/en/panama-helping-the-rainforest-help-the-panama-canal/a-55448184>

Some of my ideas:

Since in Sequim the new reservoir will be collectivising water storage, I would like to look into individualising water storage, and the code for rainwater collection and reusing water. Maybe there are changes that can be made that loosen the regulations for this and lead to residents, farms and business's storing more water for use in the drought months.

Another idea is changing the management of County Trust lands to better prioritize water resource sustainability. [The trust lands advisory committee \(TLAC\)](#) could have addressed this but this committee expired in 2016. This committee had members of diverse backgrounds, not just the financial beneficiaries, because trust lands are managed for multiple objectives. Now that we have the revenue advisory committee, only junior taxing districts are represented. So we are operating with guidance over trust lands for exclusively short term financial benefits instead of evaluating how we can balance the myriad of short and long term benefits of these lands.

As far as next steps, I am looking forward to discussing this topic with you and the group, and hearing your perspective and ideas based on your professional experience. I assume if others agree we can create a subcommittee, and I would like to explore Christy Holys idea of an environmental steward position that pursues projects that increase water resource sustainability. Another idea is recommending another board or reinstating the TLAC. If I am suggesting things that are not in the power of the CRC I apologise, I am still familiarising myself with what is possible.

Responses from Mark Lane to questions I sent him:

Let me attempt to answer each of your questions based on my knowledge:

- Could you give me a sense of where in County government planning or decisions related to water are made? I'm not 100% certain on this one—I think this is a combination of agencies—the PUD, WA State Department of Ecology which oversees the issuance of water rights, the utility districts of each city, the Departments of Community Development and Health and Human Services Environmental Health all have various roles in how water is managed in the County.
- Do impacts on water have to be determined by County Development or by Public Works? Not sure on this one—I believe it is DCD and Public Works both play roles in understanding impacts on water. For instance, the County Public Works department in conjunction with DCD are involved in the Dungeness Off Channel Reservoir project, as that project touches multiple water use areas (irrigation, salmon recovery, aquifer recharge, etc). I would recommend you touch base with Steve Gray in Public Works and Bruce Emery in DCD to gain a full understanding of their roles. And again Dept of Ecology at the state oversees water rights.
- Where in the organization is Streamkeepers located? Department of Community Development oversees—Bruce Emery is the elected Director.
- Does environmental health inspect water supplies? (I know firsthand that they do septic systems). I believe HHS Environmental Health does do water testing and monitoring but again more from a public health perspective—I would point you to Jennifer Garcelon who heads up that area.
- Any other departments where question of water supply, water quality, groundwater, stream health, or other water-related issues are dealt with? No others at the County that I can think of from those listed above.

From Tony Corrado:

Kindly forward the attached PDF file to the CRC members. It is offered as a clarification of the basis and intent to establish the position of Water Steward to preside over the issues related to preserving an adequate water supply for the entire County.

Resolution Establishing the Position of Clallam County Water Steward

WHEREAS, climate change is manifesting in both the increased severity and frequency of severe weather events, necessitating proactive planning for increased magnitude and prolonged periods of drought and loss of snowpack; and

WHEREAS, drought conditions adversely affect the Dungeness River, reducing the availability of both surface and groundwater supplies; and

WHEREAS, the effects of climate change are occurring earlier in the calendar year, resulting in earlier plant maturity, which, when coupled with insufficient irrigation water supply during critical growth stages, leads to reduced plant harvest yields; and

WHEREAS, warmer weather patterns cause significant reductions in Dungeness River flow during the late summer months, critically jeopardizing Salmon spawning due to insufficient river flow for Salmon to reach their upper river spawning grounds; and

WHEREAS, reduced surface river flow diminishes groundwater recharge, which is essential for supporting flora, fauna, and maintaining adequate water levels in the upper aquifers of the Dungeness Basin for domestic groundwater extraction; and

WHEREAS, while Clallam County possesses paper water rights in quantities sufficient to supply planned developments and water consumption, a definitive analysis of the future extent and quantities of aquifer water is lacking to ensure the adequacy of actual water resources critical for survival; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive net water balance for the entire County has not been developed to account for the possibility of dramatically reduced precipitation patterns, thereby hindering the County's ability to adequately forecast processes for securing sufficient water resources; and

WHEREAS, the Off Channel Reservoir may not provide sufficient future storage capacity to preserve additional river flow to augment the minimum flow necessary to support agriculture and Salmon spawning; and

WHEREAS, extreme and mandatory conservation methods may be required to ensure sufficient river flow due to the increasing impacts of climate change;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT Clallam County shall establish the position of Clallam County Water Steward (hereinafter referred to as "Steward").

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the position of Water Steward will have the mission of:

1. Analyzing the interrelated and interconnectivity factors of the water system;
2. Establishing a system wide analysis of current as well as future forecasts based on planned growth and measured wet water availability;
3. Developing plans for ensuring and maximizing the availability of water;

4. Creating a list of acceptable basis of consumptive uses based on a stated/public priority order of importance;
5. Mandating measures sufficient to ensure that maximal water remains available for all consumption considered critical.
6. Recommend changes to water regulation and law that is deemed necessary to achieve the stated mission.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT The Steward shall have the power to interview all necessary agencies, individuals, and experts to determine the factual basis for all analysis and planning. The Steward shall not have the power to regulate water usage or implement policy. The Steward will report to the Board of County Commissioners and shall recommend the actions required to fulfill the mission statement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT The Steward shall be elected and that the position be non partisan. The Steward shall be a volunteer position , non compensated. The Steward shall have no financial or stakeholder affiliation that represents a substantial conflict, act in total transparency and endeavor to apply fairness to all stakeholders, and operate within public oversight at all times.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT The Steward shall be provided with sufficient operating budget and County facilities in order to conduct the stated mission. Expenditures will be permitted for out-of-pocket expenses such as travel, meeting courtesies, meeting facilities and meals. The Steward will have the ability to initiate contractual efforts only through the normal contracting expertise and requirements of the appropriate County Departments and using County personnel and services.

From Town Hall meeting, Sequim, 3-26-2025

District 1
253 Pond Lane, Sequim.

Hello, my name is Jeene Hobbs and I live in the county just north of Sequim. I moved here in July of 2023. Even before moving here, I was watching the news about the area and saw that water was a common topic. Since moving here, I have gained some understanding of the role water plays in Clallam County. Fundamental in that understanding is that there is not sufficient coordination or communication among all of the entities that have water responsibilities. As a solution to that lack, I encourage the Charter Review Commission to establish a Water Steward position. The Water Steward should be a nonpartisan professional probably a hydrologist. Their responsibilities should include compiling data from the various entities with water responsibilities to create a county wide view of water issues and management. Their work should be based on data and current best scientific practice.

Water issues will not go away for lack of attention. Having a centralized position with these responsibilities could improve everyone's understanding of our water situation.

My name is David Brehm, and I am a retired engineer. I live ~~just~~^{at 253 Pond Lane in Brierley} north of the Sequim city limits, and have been following local water issues since moving here about a year & a half ago. My topic today is the need for a county-wide water steward.

With the recurring low snowpack and subsequent issues with low river flow and groundwater levels, it is apparent that managing the available water resources in the northern Olympic Peninsula is more important than ever. The only certainty is that the severity and frequency of severe weather and drought events will impact our area with an increasing rate of change and in severity. The implication of this is that historical performance is no longer a reliable predictor of future water supplies. I call on the Charter Review Commission, in collaboration with the county, cities, and tribes, to establish a "Water Steward" position or office. Such an entity must operate free from political or vested interests, such as, for example, specialists with WSU Extension. ^{the} It ^{office} should compile data, study potential policy solutions based on data and science, and to serve in an advisory capacity to ~~all~~ water management entities within Clallam County.

Good evening my name is Ann Soule and I live in District #2, in Sequim. I am here tonight to suggest that the Commission consider a proposal for a permanent water steward position.

I am recently retired from a 30 year career with Clallam County and city of Sequim as a water resources professional. I have a masters degree in water resource administration with a specialty in hydrogeology and a bachelor's in geology.

During my career with the County for 22 years I was the technical and/or administrative lead for several monitoring studies and water management plans. For City of Sequim my focus was on stormwater and sustainability programs in general.

At the current time there is no hydrologist or water resource specialist overseeing conditions in all of Clallam County. I am here to advocate that a position be created to track the many issues related to water that the County faces – including the following (by the way, all of these that I list have associated technical reports or plans on the county website):

1. Most of our mountains in Clallam County are at an elevation that is right at the threshold between being dominated by glaciers and snowpack versus melting glaciers and rainfall. Warming winter and summer temperatures will have a huge impact on all the watersheds in Clallam County. Out west the watersheds that have always relied on lots and lots of rain are actually less wet, and some small community water systems have actually run out of water.

2. The Dungeness and the Elwha both rely on snow melt for summer stream flow and have run extremely short of normal due to “snowpack drought” several years out of the last 10. In the Dungeness this has put huge pressure on the farming community to stop or slow down irrigation – and some crops don't survive. Low streamflow also strains salmon migration, and many of our salmon runs are already threatened with extinction. And low streamflow also affects recharge of aquifers in the Dungeness because about 25% of the groundwater budget comes from leakage from the river.

3. Water storage is essential to meet the needs of our communities. Aquifer storage and recovery is a proven method and could be promising if managed closely so that stored water isn't lost to the Strait. The proposed off-channel reservoir is also very promising, since large scale storage will be essential if the farming community is to survive – plus it offers a way to supplement aquifer recharge.

Ann S.

4. Comprehensive watershed planning resulted in the Elwha Dungeness watershed plan of 2005 which led to the Dungeness instream flow rule being adopted in 2012. That was an important achievement for the Dungeness – essentially establishing a water right for the River – but there are other rivers in the county that await similar attention.

5. The numerical groundwater model used by the rule's mitigation program was calibrated with data from 1995 and 96. New information about deep aquifers could be pertinent to its construction and new – and changing – water supply patterns certainly warrants a re-calibration of the model. The last comprehensive assessment of groundwater levels in the Dungeness was in 2009... a long time ago but certainly more recent than 1996.

6. There are nitrates in eastern county aquifers and the concentrations are going up in some areas but we don't know the status in most areas. The last comprehensive study was around 2011.

7. Sea level rise is occurring at a faster rate than previously expected. A higher sea level means a potentially higher vulnerability to saltwater intrusion into drinking water wells near the coastline. The last time coastline wells were checked for chloride was in 1992.

I hope this laundry list of water challenges convinces you that water is a top issue – a real issue that directly affects public health, our businesses, and our environment. The glaciers that fed our streams and aquifers for hundreds of years are either gone or almost gone, and paying closer attention to water management can't wait. That requires data, and even more importantly, someone to track it. Hiring out contractors for every small study isn't good enough since there is no continuity and no institutional memory accumulating to perceive what studies are even needed.

As I said, there is no longer a local agency hydrologist tracking conditions in all County watersheds. My recommendation is a water stewardship office – or at least one permanent, technical position with hydrology expertise. It should be funded at least partially by the state and housed with WSU Extension. It could also be partially funded by all local jurisdictions as they would serve as a local expert, advising the planning and policy-making that all jurisdictions need to do.

From Alex Fane:

To the Water Steward Committee,

I have tried to boil down the need for and duties of a elected, uncompensated Water Steward. There is no need to consider an appointed position as the entire concept is to create an impartial post that is data-driven and independent of developmental and other interests. The below is a proposed starting point, using criteria submitted by Tony Corrado recently. Please forward this email to other members on the committee I may have omitted.

Proposed Clallam County Charter Amendment Submission Submitted to the Charter Review Commission, March 2025

Title: Amend the Clallam County Charter to Establish the Office of County Water Steward

Text of Proposed Charter Amendment (To be inserted under Article 4: Elected Officials)

Section X: Clallam County Water Steward

1. Position Established

The Office of Clallam County Water Steward is hereby established as an elected, nonpartisan, volunteer position. The Water Steward shall serve as an independent advisor on water resource sustainability, availability, and planning, and shall act in the public interest to assess and recommend policies that ensure adequate water for agriculture, ecosystems, and residential use in the face of climate change.

2. Duties and Authority

The Water Steward shall:

- Analyze countywide water systems, including groundwater, river flow, aquifers, and usage trends;
- Forecast future water availability in light of planned growth, climate change, and ecological needs;
- Recommend a hierarchy of consumptive uses and sustainable practices;
- Propose changes to water-related regulations, laws, and conservation strategies;
- Provide regular reports and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), county departments, and the public.

The Water Steward shall not have regulatory or enforcement authority and shall operate as an independent advisory office.

3. Qualifications and Terms

- The Water Steward shall be a qualified Clallam County voter with no substantial financial or stakeholder conflicts in water-related industries.
- The position shall be nonpartisan, elected by countywide vote to a four-year term, and shall receive no compensation other than reimbursement for approved expenses.
- The Steward shall operate with full transparency and under public oversight.

4. Support and Resources

The County shall provide the Water Steward with:

- Modest operating funds sufficient for public outreach, research, and travel;
- Access to County data, staff coordination, and meeting space;
- The ability to initiate studies and recommendations through existing County procedures, contracts, and departments.

Ballot Title (75-word limit):

Shall the Clallam County Charter be amended to create an elected, nonpartisan, volunteer position of Water Steward to provide independent analysis and recommendations on water availability, usage priorities, and sustainability, and to advise the County Commissioners and public on long-term water planning in response to climate change?

Explanatory Statement for Voter Pamphlet:

This amendment creates the office of Clallam County Water Steward—an elected, nonpartisan, volunteer position. The Water Steward will analyze water systems and availability, forecast future needs, and recommend sustainable water use strategies to the County Commissioners and the public. The Steward will not have enforcement powers but will operate independently with public transparency. The role is created in response to concerns about drought, river flow, aquifer levels, and climate change impacts on agriculture, ecosystems, and communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Fane

Clallam County Charter Review Commissioner, District 1

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