

Joint Resolution

Whatcom County Council No. 92-73
Bellingham City Council No. 92-68
Water District 10 No. 560

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM, WHATCOM COUNTY, AND WATER DISTRICT 10 ADOPTING GOALS FOR THE LAKE WHATCOM WATERSHED.

WHEREAS, Lake Whatcom and its associated watersheds, is currently the source of drinking water for approximately half the residents in the County; and

WHEREAS, water quality and quantity concerns throughout the county now and in the future will significantly impact the availability of safe, adequate supplies of water for the future; and

WHEREAS, many potential and actual documented sources of contamination exist within the Lake Whatcom watershed with particular concerns associated with development and urbanization within the watershed; and

WHEREAS, numerous studies exist across the United States which document the correlation between urbanization and water quality degradation, and as development increases within the watershed, the probability of adverse water quality impacts increases; and

WHEREAS, the Stormwater Runoff Project conducted by Western Washington University in 1990-1991 provided local documentation illustrating the occurrence of water quality degradation associated with urbanized vs. non-urbanized areas; and

WHEREAS, protection of the resource is in the long run generally less than the cost of treatment or replacement of the supply should it become contaminated; and

WHEREAS, the potential for adverse short and long-term public health impacts is substantially less if protection efforts are given priority over treatment; and

WHEREAS, the adoption of common goals will aid the City, County and Water District 10 in carrying out activities that will protect, preserve and enhance water resources in the Lake Whatcom Watershed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM, WHATCOM COUNTY AND WATER DISTRICT 10 that the following general goal statements are hereby adopted, as well as the specific goal statements which are attached hereto:

General Goal Statements:

To recognize Lake Whatcom and its watershed as the major drinking-water reservoir for the County and develop public and private management principles for the lake and watershed consistent with a drinking water reservoir environment. Affirm this goal by establishing the name: Lake Whatcom Reservoir.

To protect, preserve and enhance water quality and manage water quantity to ensure long-term sustainable supplies for a variety of uses, with priority placed on domestic water supply. Management programs and actions will be made in recognition of existing contractual agreements and potential for review and renegotiation in light of these goals.

To prioritize protection over treatment in managing Lake Whatcom and its watersheds. Management actions shall reflect a long term view of replacement or treatment costs.

To manage water quantity to sustain long-term efficient use of the water for beneficial uses within the county that are consistent with a drinking-water reservoir, and recognize the integral link with the Nooksack River and associated water resource concerns.

To ensure that opportunities for public comment and participation are provided in policy and management program development, and to promote public awareness and responsible individual actions.

To promote learning, research, and information opportunities which better our understanding of the watershed system, the impacts of activities, and the benefits and potentials of policies implemented.

Goal 1: Public Education and Involvement

To develop and incorporate mechanisms which:

- Provide information regarding individual actions which can reduce or mitigate urban impacts;
- Provide educational formats for describing quality and quantity issues;
- Provide opportunity for public participation in developing the management program and policies for the lake; and
- Utilize enforcement actions as opportunities for education and learning

Goal 2: Watershed Ownership

- Pursue public ownership and protection of the watershed whenever possible through public/private partnerships, tax incentives, transfer of development rights, land trusts, grants, etc.

Goal 3: Information and Data Management

- Coordinate with appropriate agencies to maintain and expand a database sufficient for detection of trends, assessment of problems, evaluation of actions, and forming management decision that ensure protection and enhancement efforts are achieved.

Goal 4: Forest Practices

- Promote low impact forest practices in the watershed over residential development while working to ensure that forest management practices are conducted in harmony with the principles of a drinking water reservoir.
 - Pursue zoning and development incentives to retain lands in long term forestry
 - Develop and maintain a comprehensive watershed forest management plan which minimizes cumulative impacts on the drinking water reservoir.

Goals 5&6: Hazardous Materials

- Ensure that potential for water quality contamination associated with the use and transport of hazardous materials in the watershed is minimized.
 - Restrict and/or designate the route of transport for certain kinds of hazardous materials with the watershed
 - Implement a hazardous materials spill prevention program involving improvements in road design, traffic speed modification, and hazardous material transportation routing restrictions
 - Develop an identification and reporting system consistent with state and federal guidelines

- Coordinate information sharing among agencies, citizens, local government, and emergency responders to optimize response time to water quality threats
- Reduce adverse water quality impacts from storage and handling of hazardous materials within the watershed.
 - Identify the various sources and areas of concern (i.e. wrecking yards, underground storage tanks, etc.)
 - Evaluate effectiveness of existing regulations and policies to adequately address concern
 - Recommend and implement additional actions as appropriate (i.e. restrict or condition certain types of activities)
 - Educate users on hazardous materials alternatives, use, and disposal with an emphasis on avoidance of use of hazardous materials in the watershed

Goal 7: Nutrient Loading and Other Potential Threats

- Identify other sources of nutrient loading and other threats and implement measures to minimize impacts on the lake.

Goal 8: Recreation

- Allow recreational opportunities which do not adversely impact the watershed or water quality while finding appropriate ways to reduce impacts of existing activities.

Goal 9: Solid Waste

- Ensure that the generation, handling, storage, or disposal of solid waste does not degrade water quality
 - Prohibit the development of landfills within the watershed
 - Direct the Health Department to assess the "Y" road landfill contributions to water quality degradation
 - Prohibit the on-site burial of waste within the watershed (state regulations currently exempt single family residences and single family farms engaged in on-site solid waste handling)
 - Promote education efforts directed at the proper disposal of waste, and use of the household hazardous waste facility

Goal 10. Spill Response

- Ensure that spill prevention and response programs adequately protect water quality.
- Improve spill response program to ensure that a communication network associated with spill occurrences is clearly defined, tested and implemented.

Goal 11. Stormwater

- Prevent water quality degradation and water quantity impacts associated with stormwater runoff.
 - Adopt and implement stormwater management standards and maintenance practices that include control of off-site impacts, the use of source control and treatment, Best Management Practices, erosion and sediment control, and operation and maintenance.
 - Control development density and location
 - Phase in a stormwater management program for existing development, including treatment of discharges
 - Evaluate options which can be applied to both existing and new development to reduce impacts on water quality, including vegetation management, education, and cost incentives
 - Require maintenance of stormwater treatment devices and facilities

Goal 12: Transportation

- Design and develop transportation and traffic systems within the watershed to minimize the impacts on water quality.
 - Promote the development and use of mass transit, and other alternative transportation systems which minimize detrimental impacts of traffic within the watershed
 - Design major routes and transportation lines so that they are not located adjacent to the lake or in a location/design which does not allow for adequate treatment prior to entering the lake
 - Ensure road drainage systems for existing and new roads minimize water quality impacts
 - Evaluate and implement actions which minimize the number and use of roads which lie adjacent to the lake (e.g. reduce "through traffic" by making appropriate roads dead end)
 - Provide ongoing evaluation of effects of transportation on feeder streams, surrounding wetlands, and the lake

Goal 13. Urbanization/Development

- Prevent water quality degradation associated with development within the watershed
 - Review and recommend changes in zoning and development potential that are compatible with a drinking water reservoir environment
 - (In addition to zoning) identify and promote other actions to minimize potential for increased development in the watershed (i.e. land trust, development rights, cost incentives, etc.)
 - develop specific standards which reduce the impacts of urbanization, such as minimal lot clearing; clustered development to reduce infrastructure; collection and treatment of stormwater before entering the lake
 - develop appropriate interlocal agreements with governing agencies to prohibit the potential for additional development once an agreed upon level is set

Goals 14&15: Sewer System

- Prioritize the utilization of sewers over on-site systems in a manner consistent with management principles for a drinking water reservoir environment.
 - Ensure that sewer systems promote, improve, and protect water quality without promoting growth.
 - Prevent direct discharge of sewage from sewer systems
- Review appropriate sites and promote extension of sewer systems into areas with septic system problems

Goal 16: On-Site Waste Systems

- Ensure that accidental or intentional discharges of hazardous materials and other contaminants to septic systems serving domestic and commercial facilities do not adversely impact water quality.
 - Establish a complaint response system which would prioritize action on complaints within the Lake Whatcom Watershed
 - Develop and implement an operational permit system for all septic systems within the watershed
 - Conduct a more intensive survey at the older seasonal residences as recommended in the Septic System Survey conducted by the Health Department in 1990
 - Encourage the proper use and maintenance of systems through public education, system monitoring and regulation enforcement
 - Eliminate the use of hazardous septic system cleaners in the watershed

- Identify existing and potential new commercial facilities within the watershed which use hazardous materials and evaluate, recommend and implement management plans to prevent impacts on water quality

Goal 17: Conservation

- Promote the wise and efficient use of water through conservation for domestic, industrial, and commercial users.

Goal 18. Diversion Operation for Reservoir Management

- To manage or reduce the diversion of water from the Nooksack River and Lake Whatcom in a manner consistent with water resource laws and to the extent possible minimizes impacts on beneficial uses within the Nooksack Basin, with a particular emphasis on fisheries.

Goal 19. Recharge

- Where it does not conflict with water quality goals and objectives, identify and promote beneficial recharge practices within the watershed and assist in maintaining supplies for all beneficial uses (e.g. stream buffers, encouraging minimum impervious surfaces within the watershed, etc.)
- Monitor stream quality, flow, and fisheries as a method of early detection of impacts to water quality (in the Lake)

Goal 20. Distribution/Availability within the County

- Given the importance of Lake Whatcom and its Middle Fork Diversion as a source of water supply, and the limited availability of alternative sources to support anticipated growth in the county, establish a process to determine the extent to which the Lake Whatcom reservoir water should be made available beyond the Bellingham Urban Area.

Goal 21. Fish and Wildlife

- Promote actions and programs which protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat to include:
 - Design culverts and bridges over streams which do not prohibit fish passage
 - Promote and encourage actions to correct areas where fish passage problems are already existing
 - Maintain, protect, and re-create stream buffers
 - Regulate stream flow to reduce scouring and sediment deposition

[The above resolution was signed by Bellingham Council President on November 30, 1992, Whatcom County Council Chair on November 30, 1992 and by Water District 10 Commissioners on December 11, 1992.]