
Foreword

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) was prepared by the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks to analyze the significant adverse environmental impacts of the Brightwater Regional Wastewater Treatment System. The main feature of the Brightwater proposal is a new wastewater treatment plant that would be ready in 2010 to serve projected growth in population in north King and south Snohomish Counties. Conveyance pipelines would move untreated wastewater to the treatment plant and move treated wastewater from the plant to a discharge point about one mile offshore in Puget Sound waters.

Prepared under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the Final EIS is intended to serve as the basis for all state and local permit decisions for the Brightwater System and as the principal resource document for federal agencies with regulatory authority. It identifies alternatives, evaluates the probable significant adverse environmental impacts of the alternatives, and proposes reasonable mitigation measures. Four alternatives are evaluated:

- **Route 9–195th Street System (Preferred Alternative).** A treatment plant at the “Route 9 site” in unincorporated Snohomish County, north of the City Woodinville; an influent pipeline from Kenmore to the plant site and an effluent pipeline from the plant site to Puget Sound, placed in underground tunnels primarily under NE 195th and NE 205th Streets in King County; and a marine outfall pipeline extending off Point Wells into Puget Sound.
- **Route 9–228th Street System.** Same as the Route 9–195th Street System, except that the effluent pipeline would be installed primarily under 228th Street SE/SW in Snohomish County.
- **Unocal System.** A treatment plant at the “Unocal site” in the City of Edmonds, just east of Puget Sound; an influent pipeline in an underground tunnel that extends from Bothell to the Unocal site, primarily under SR-522 and SR-104; and an outfall pipeline starting near Point Edwards and extending into Puget Sound. Two sub-alternatives to the Unocal alternative: (1) building a structural lid to support a multimodal transportation facility, and/or (2) expanding treatment plant capacity to accommodate flows from two existing treatment plants in Edmonds.
- **No Action Alternative.** The Brightwater System would not be built.

In December 2003, King County Executive Ron Sims is expected to select the final locations for the Brightwater treatment plant, outfall, and associated conveyance facilities. His decision will culminate a three-phase process undertaken to develop and refine the overall Brightwater proposal and to find suitable sites for Brightwater facilities. The regional process has been deliberative and comprehensive, including at every step governments, stakeholders, citizens, and elected officials from throughout the region.

This siting process is described below, preceded by a discussion of the regional mandate for Brightwater and followed by a description of the organization of this document.

Regional Wastewater Services Plan

The purpose of the Brightwater proposal is to carry out both the regional policy mandate in King County’s Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) and other regional policy criteria adopted by the King County Council. An environmental impact statement was completed for the RWSP in 1998. Adopted in 1999, the RWSP presents the plan for how King County will provide the regional wastewater infrastructure throughout King County’s Service Area to support planned growth well into the twenty-first century. It was prepared in response to the requirement of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) that cities and counties prepare local comprehensive plans that include long-term population growth projections. Under the GMA, facilities such as Brightwater are termed “essential public facilities.” The GMA requires local governments to establish a process for identifying and siting essential public facilities.

The Brightwater EIS is a project-level analysis. It was preceded by the programmatic analysis in the RWSP EIS and by additional environmental reviews both by King County and local jurisdictions conducted in conjunction with their respective comprehensive plans.

Early Siting Process to Develop the Brightwater Proposal

Following adoption of the RWSP, King County began a 4-year, three-phase process to define and develop the Brightwater proposal. Policy criteria were developed in consultation with Snohomish County, all affected jurisdictions in King and Snohomish Counties, and members of the community. These policy criteria were used in concert with environmental, engineering, community, and cost factors to screen and advance potential sites for further consideration and environmental review. Chapter 2 details the siting process.

Beginning early in 2000, King County developed a public involvement program for the project. A Siting Advisory Committee helped to inform the siting process. The committee was made up of high-level officials representing tribal governments, local jurisdictions, businesses, and environmental groups. Community members participated in nominating treatment plant sites and developing the policy criteria. Other activities included focus groups, workshops with regulators from local jurisdictions and from state and federal agencies, and public meetings throughout the siting area.

Phase 1 and 2 screening identified four potential treatment plant locations that complied with the policy criteria that were used to help define the proposal. Executive Sims selected two of the sites—Route 9 and Unocal—to carry forward in the EIS. These sites were combined with conveyance alignments and outfall zones to form system

alternatives. Phase 3 (detailed environmental review) began in 2002. SEPA stipulates that environmental review begin as soon as the principal features of a proposal and its environmental impacts can be reasonably identified so that the EIS can make an important contribution to the decision-making process. Decision-making takes place throughout SEPA review in response to comments and new information, helping to shape and mitigate the proposal. Project design and SEPA review are complementary and concurrent processes. As Brightwater project concepts have evolved in response to comments, increasingly more in-depth technical and design work has been done. This in-depth work, in turn, has facilitated more specific SEPA analysis.

Each stage of the SEPA review presents a snapshot of the project's progress, beginning with issuance of the Determination of Significance and Scoping in June 2002 and progressing to the Draft EIS in November 2002 and this Final EIS in November 2003. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, considerable SEPA review preceded the Brightwater EIS. The scoping notice for the Draft EIS presented an array of potential conveyance routes that covered the range of options that could advance to EIS analysis. Informed of the range of possibilities, the public could then participate more fully in narrowing the range for evaluation in the Draft EIS. More than 1,600 scoping comments were received. These comments, along with community workshops and further evaluation of the conveyance systems conducted during this time, resulted in the selection of three system alternatives for advancement to Draft EIS analysis: (1) Route 9–195th Street System, (2) Route 9–228th Street System, and (3) Unocal System.

The fine-tuning of the proposal, including the packaging of components into three action alternatives, provided enough information for the King County Executive to identify a preferred alternative for evaluation in the Draft EIS—the Route 9–195th Street System. In identifying a preferred alternative, the Executive wanted to alert the public of the County's preference in order to help focus comments and set priorities for further studies and design. He made the decision on the basis of information available at the time, with the understanding that the preference could shift as more information came to light.

The designs set forth in the Draft EIS were preliminary in certain areas. As was the case in previous stages, information on the treatment plant and marine outfall was presented in greater detail than for the conveyance systems. Where information was limited in a specific area, the probable significant adverse environmental impacts presented for the three action alternatives were a worst-case analysis. The Draft EIS also outlined reasonable mitigation measures to reduce and, in some cases, eliminate the identified impacts.

The Final EIS

Although SEPA requires only a 30-day comment period, King County provided a 75-day comment period for the Draft EIS (November 6, 2002, to January 21, 2003). Four public hearings were held during this period. In all, 550 agencies, tribes, local jurisdictions, water districts, groups, and individuals submitted more than 5,000 individual comments.

Comments were assigned to categories. Brightwater team members responded to comments in their particular areas of expertise. Between issuance of the Draft EIS and Final EIS, King County provided avenues outside of the SEPA-mandated comment period for people to learn more about and to comment on components of the project:

- A series of three public technical seminars, held in summer 2003, provided an opportunity for the public to review and comment on comprehensive technical studies completed and circulated after publication of the Draft EIS.
- The Executive Advisory Committee (formerly called the Siting Advisory Committee) continued to advise the Snohomish and King County Executives through February 2003.
- Meetings were held with water districts in the project area to learn more about their systems, to discuss their identified concerns over potential project impacts to quantity and quality of water supplies, and to mutually devise ways to mitigate impacts.
- Snohomish County was given the opportunity to review and comment on the Preliminary Final EIS.

Comments received through all avenues have influenced the content of this Final EIS.

The period between the Draft EIS and Final EIS was extremely productive, as evidenced by the greater level of specificity and detail in the Final EIS and by the numerous appendices to the document. Extensive analytical, field, and design work was performed. This work placed particular emphasis on the Preferred Alternative. This emphasis allowed King County to (1) use the Preferred Alternative as a benchmark to evaluate all alternatives, (2) focus the work and control costs, and (3) evaluate whether the Preferred Alternative still merited the preferred status. The two other action alternatives were developed and evaluated to the extent necessary to allow for such a meaningful evaluation of impacts and mitigation measures. More in-depth analysis of one alternative is allowed under SEPA as long as such an analysis does not limit the choice of reasonable alternatives. The additional analyses performed for the Final EIS confirm that all three action alternatives are viable alternatives that could meet the Brightwater project objectives.

Although the three action alternatives presented in the Draft EIS have remained essentially intact, they have undergone substantial refinement in specific areas. Additional work done since the Draft EIS, as documented in the appendices, contributed greatly to the proposal and analysis presented in the Final EIS. The Final EIS also reflects the results of ongoing work and the critical contributions of entities such as Snohomish County, water and sewer districts, tribes, and permitting agencies. The refinements to the alternatives cover the whole spectrum of the project—from treatment plant technologies to the number of conveyance construction sites to the preferred method for installing the outfall in the nearshore area.

Chapter 3 details project refinements made since the Draft EIS was issued. Concerns raised in comments on the Draft EIS regarding potential contamination or reduction of groundwater resources led to an additional comprehensive study of groundwater and the groundwater–surface water relationship in the project area. Tunnel depths, tunnel lining, construction dewatering, and grouting methods were adjusted on the basis of this new analysis in order to preserve water resources. Additional meteorological modeling was done, since the Draft EIS was issued, to analyze the potential for odor impacts from the two treatment plant sites. In addition, the transportation impacts analysis has been updated to address cumulative impacts of treatment plant construction at both the Unocal and Route 9 sites along with planned future projects in the near vicinity.

Next Steps—The Siting Decision and Beyond

The King County Executive’s final decision on the Brightwater proposal will be based on several considerations: the analysis in the EIS; comments from federal, state, and local agencies and from tribal governments; comments from the public and elected officials; and many other factors, including cost and regional policies. In addition, permitting agencies will determine whether the proposed action is consistent with the regulations that they are responsible for implementing. Many permit processes will include the opportunity for public review and comment.

The Executive’s decision will launch the next phases of the project. King County has begun preliminary work with local, state, and federal permitting and regulatory agencies and with affected landowners. Preparation of a facility plan and the predesign for the Preferred Alternative are currently under way. After the Executive makes his decision, work on the selected alternative will proceed. After permits and necessary properties are acquired, project design will be finalized and construction will begin.

Environmental considerations will factor into every subsequent step toward project implementation and continued operation. Final decisions regarding the best way to mitigate specific impacts will be made during permit review.

Organization of This EIS

This Final EIS consists of 16 volumes:

- Volumes 1–3, EIS chapters
- Volumes 4–10, appendices
- Volumes 11–15, responses to written and oral comments on the Draft EIS
- Volume 16, summary of summer 2003 technical seminars, and comments received

Volume 1 contains Chapters 1–3. These chapters provide background information, the project description and comparison of alternatives, and a summary of information contained in the EIS. Chapter 1 also includes a discussion of areas of controversy and issues that are yet to be resolved but that may have a bearing on the project. Chapters 4-17 in Volumes 2 and 3 describe the affected environment, impacts, and mitigation for natural and built elements of the environment. Each of these chapters begins with a discussion of comments received on the Draft EIS and the changes made to the text in response to those comments. The chapters end with a chart that summarizes the mitigation for each area evaluated in the chapter. The appendices, contained in Volumes 4–10, are organized by chapters in the EIS. Earlier versions of many of these appendices were presented at the technical seminars conducted in summer 2003. These appendices were revised in response to comments received during and after the seminars.

The distribution list at the end of Volume 3 lists those who will be receiving copies of the Final EIS. The Fact Sheet at the front of Volumes 1–3 gives information on how to order copies or CDs and how to access the information by other means, such as local libraries and the Brightwater Web site (<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wtd/brightwater/env/>).