

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## King County Water Quality Benefits Evaluation Toolkit

King County is committed to making big investments in water quality over the next decade. The Water Quality Benefits Evaluation (WQBE) Toolkit will support the County in identifying water quality improvements that are effective at reducing pollutants and improving ecological and human health. Below you'll find answers to some frequently asked questions:

### WQBE TOOLKIT

#### What is in the WQBE Toolkit?

The WQBE Toolkit is a set of computational models used to gather data and identify where pollution can be reduced and water quality can be improved. The models include:

- Pollutant loading models, which estimate pollutant loads for major King County waterbodies taking into account major point and non-point sources.
- System for Urban Stormwater Treatment and Analysis Integration (SUSTAIN) models, which identify cost-effective combinations of potential water quality projects and programs for reduction of pollutant loads or stormwater volumes.
- Qualitative causal models, which define relationships between potential water quality projects and programs and a suite of ecological/human health endpoints (southern resident orca and Chinook salmon populations, toxics in fish, fecal contamination at shellfish beds, and algal toxins and fecal contamination at swimming beaches).

#### When will the Toolkit be complete?

The WQBE Toolkit will be complete by the end of 2022. A preliminary set of the models will be available sooner to support King County planning efforts in the near term.

### WQBE AND DECISION MAKING

#### How will WQBE influence policy decisions?

WQBE is not a policy or decision-making process. Instead, WQBE is a toolkit that will be used to provide decision-makers information about which water quality projects and programs could be most effective at reducing threats to people and aquatic animals. There are several King County planning processes that will be making decisions using a variety of information, including equity and social justice, sustainability, financial implications, information from the WQBE toolkit, and more.

#### How does WQBE interact with current King County planning efforts?

The preliminary WQBE toolkit is supporting aspects of King County Wastewater Treatment Division planning efforts, including the Clean Water Plan and the Combined Sewer Overflow Long-term Control Plan, as well as other County planning efforts such as the Stormwater Investment Plan and Clean Water Healthy Habitat. For example, WQBE SUSTAIN models are informing the development of some stormwater components of the Clean Water Plan's water quality investment options. The Clean Water Plan will also use the WQBE causal models, along with other water quality, financial, equity, sustainability, community, and system health evaluations, to explore outcomes of different approaches for investing in the regional wastewater system and regional water quality.

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### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

#### How is the County working with stakeholders?

The County has identified several external scientists to provide detailed technical feedback on the methods, input data, and assumptions for each model in the WQBE toolkit. The County is also inviting interested stakeholders to provide feedback on these materials through an online platform where they can review and comment on specific topics of interest.

#### What kind of stakeholder feedback is the County looking to receive?

We need input from our partners to improve the toolkit so that it can more effectively support our collective work in the region. The County is asking stakeholders for feedback on their own potential use of the toolkit, additional data sources or studies that should be consulted, and identify opportunities for future improvements.

#### What stakeholders are the County hoping to engage?

King County is hoping to engage environmental scientists, natural resource managers, policy makers, hydrologists, modelers, and other water quality professionals who use this type of information for decision-making.

#### How will stakeholder feedback be used by WQBE?

The WQBE team will consider all feedback shared by stakeholders and use it to refine the model inputs and outputs as necessary. We will not respond to each comment individually but will provide a summary of the feedback. The team may get feedback that is outside the current scope, but this could help identify gaps or future needs that may be addressed under a different scope of work or through collaboration with partner organizations.

For more information, please reach out Carly Greyell at [Carly.Greyell@kingcounty.gov](mailto:Carly.Greyell@kingcounty.gov) and join our mailing list to receive future project updates.