

SNO-KING WATER-SEWER DISTRICT COALITION

2014 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

(Adopted November 12, 1013)

Statement of basic principles: The municipal, water-sewer districts of Alderwood, Coal Creek, Covington, Cross Valley, Mukilteo, Olympic View, Sammamish Plateau, and Woodinville comprise the Sno-King Water-Sewer District Coalition. We are committed to providing safe, reliable, and economically priced potable water—for residential, commercial, industrial, fire protection, and other lawful uses. We provide sewage collection, transmission, and treatment services and some street lighting services. In addition, we participate in local and regional water supply planning, system planning, and inter-system coordination.

All water-sewer districts, which are rate-payer based, have an on-going, distinctive role in developing and sustaining utility services across the state, especially in facilitating public health and safety.

Sno-King members endeavor to actively and effectively fulfill their obligations to public health and safety; economic vitality & community development; environmental stewardship; and, quality of life for their rate-payers. We also meet the legislative, regulatory, security, and governance criteria imposed upon us. To convey concerns and discuss future alternatives, the Sno-King Board periodically adopts an agenda, reached by consensus, of legislative and regulatory objectives.

In 2014, Sno-King expects the following issues will be actively considered by the Legislature or regulatory agencies. Sno-King will engage these issues from the point-of-view stated below.

- * **Public Works Assistance Account.** Sno-King supports restoring the low-interest, merit-based Public Works Assistance Account loan (only) program for water, sewer, storm water, solid waste, and local transportation projects critical for maintaining local public health and safety, environmental improvements, economic stabilization and stimulus in re-developing or growing communities; restoring the income stream to build the account; retaining current project types and recipients; and, retaining the opportunity for state-level loans to match federal funding.

Sno-King will continue to support and participate in the Public Works Board response to and accommodation of the 2013 budget proviso directing optimizing of federal resources; adjusting project selection and scoring criteria; and, suggesting an increase in loan interest rates.

- * **District assumption only with a vote.** Sno-King supports orderly assumption of all or part of a water-sewer district only if all of the ratepayers in the subject district vote affirmatively for the take-over. This would require repeal of RCW 35.13A, which currently allows a city to assume all or part of a water-sewer district without a vote of the affected ratepayers—a process that has proven disruptive and expensive.
- * **Federal EPA inclusion of fire hydrants in lead-free retrofits.** Sno-King strongly opposes and will work against the EPA proposal (being implemented by the Department

of Ecology) to include fire hydrants in the list of water system components installed or replaced after January 4, 2014 that must be lead-free. This will require EPA to withdraw its finding that hydrants are to be included. Contact with members of Congress would be helpful.

- * **Federal fish consumption standards may become unreasonable.** Proposed standards for the level of pollutants aggregating in fish caught in and consumed from the waters of Puget Sound and tributaries are both impossible to measure and impossible to treat to. Any new guidelines should be based on scientific findings and realistic, measurable indicators. Impacts could be felt both in the treatment of wastewater and the handling of storm water run-off. Sno-King will track and remain concerned over unrealistic tightening of indicators for consumption or contamination of fish.
- * **Proposed new revenue sources for fish habitat enhancement.** Sno-King will continue to tract efforts to identify and implement new revenue streams for increasing fish habitat in Puget Sound and its tributaries. Sno-King interests will attend and monitor future meetings of the work group on this issue.
- * **Sno-King seeks clarification of “grinder pump” responsibilities.** Responsibility for grinder pump maintenance and repair is not evenly applied. Sno-King will seek improvement and clarification of the relevant rules. (Sammamish Plateau is working on a proposed legal remedy.)
- * **Permit-exempt wells.** Sno-King supports improved enforcement of the prohibition of use of exempt wells for landscape watering beyond the lawful limit of one-half acre. Ways to avoid over-use of permit-exempt wells is for the local water purveyor to receive notice before an exempt well is drilled-enabling timely discussion about lawful limits of use with the property owner, use of “dimmer switch” rules, better proof of tying building permit issuance with lawfully confirmed water, and metering of consumption from permit exempt wells.
- * **Health Care for Commissioners.** Sno-King supports amending federal VEBA legislation to clarify that payments on behalf of commissioners may be made for “health care benefits,” not just “health insurance.” [VEBA is a voluntary employees' beneficiary association under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(9).] There are fixes needed at both the state and federal levels in order to be able to fairly administer this important program. Sno-King will continue to work with Senator Cantwell and Representative Reichert.
- * **Population Growth Distribution Subsequent to Census.** Sno-King supports requiring that the assignment of population growth to an area served by a water-sewer district be accompanied by agreed-upon identification of the source of sufficient water to serve the projected population in that service area. Sno-King would like for special purpose utility districts to be included earlier in the process wherein population is assigned following a census update.
- * **Utility taxes authority for local governments.** Sno-King will work to insure that any such new taxes are only imposed as part of franchise agreements, interlocal agreements, or long-term contracts between local or regional governments and water-sewer districts. Repeal of RCW 35.13A would enable Sno-King to support more local government flexibility regarding additional taxes.

* **Support of the legislative objectives of the Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts, including:**

Support of the repeal of RCW 35.13A, as noted above;
Permitting a water-sewer district to issue its own warrants if it has a budget of between \$250,000 and \$5,000,000 with agreement by the county treasurer; and,
Limiting recovery, liability of over- or under-billed account to three years.

In addition, if germane legislation or regulatory reform is proposed in certain issue areas, Sno-King will advocate the following positions:

- * Allowing water-sewer districts to control the dissemination of sensitive (security) information, particularly GPS-generated data, about critical assets and critical asset systems to protect public health and safety.
- * Requiring that hook-up to available water source and wastewater disposal system be a condition of receiving a county or city building permit.
- * Supporting the Department of Ecology to utilize a ten-year cycle for review of sewer systems that continue to be in substantial compliance with their operating plans.
- * Opposition to any changes to the lien laws.

Sno-King 2014 Legislative Agenda, amended and adopted, 11-12-13.