



March 5, 2021

Olympia City Council
PO Box 1967
Olympia, WA 98507-1967

Dear Mayor Selby and Council members:

SUBJECT: Deschutes Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan

The Utility Advisory Committee (UAC) provides this letter of recommendation to City Council regarding the Deschutes Watershed Restoration and Enhancement (WRE) Plan. The Deschutes WRE Plan (Plan) is required by the Streamflow Restoration law (law; RCW 90.94). The law supports healthy and sustainable salmon populations while ensuring rural communities have access to water.

The WRE Committee is chaired by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and is charged with developing the Plan. Ecology expects WRE Committee members to obtain approval from their entities to vote on the Plan. The WRE Committee must cast a consensus vote to submit the Plan to Ecology for comparison with the law and possible rulemaking. Rulemaking means Ecology may amend the Deschutes Instream Flow Rule (Chapter 173-513 Washington Administrative Code).

The Plan forecasts 2,616 new domestic (permit-exempt) wells within the Deschutes watershed over the 2018-2038 planning horizon, including 25-50 new wells within the Olympia city limits and urban growth area. These new wells are estimated to impact streamflows by 435 acre-feet per year of consumptive water use. The Plan recommends dozens of projects and many policy actions to offset this potential impact. These projects and actions will support Thurston County's ability to approve new wells, forecast primarily in rural areas of the watershed.

The Plan contains 11 projects for Olympia all of which are currently in our Capital Improvement Program. The Plan also contains proposed policy actions. One action – the Deschutes Watershed Council – is anticipated to involve Olympia. The Deschutes Watershed Council is envisioned as a collaborative partnership of local stakeholders to support ongoing implementation of the Plan. Adaptive management components in the Plan support a net ecological benefit for the watershed. The WRE Committee developed the Plan fully intending implementation. Information about the Streamflow Restoration law and the Deschutes WRE Plan can be found on Ecology's public website: [Department of Ecology - Committees, Boards, and Workgroups \(wa.gov\)](https://www.ecy.wa.gov/Program/CommitteesBoardsandWorkgroups.aspx)

The UAC was briefed on the Plan on February 4, 2021 and invited to comment on it via Olympia's primary WRE Committee representative, Donna Buxton. The LUEC February 18, 2021 briefing will include the same invitation for the LUEC members to comment on the Plan. Ecology will finalize the Plan for the WRE Committee's vote on April 20, 2021.

Financial Implications Projects in the Plan are eligible for Ecology's WRE Grant Program. This program is supported by \$300M in legislative funding over 15 years. The Plan's funding sources for implementation include possible cost-sharing among members of the Deschutes Watershed Council, if formed.

Recommendation to City Council – The UAC supports Olympia staff representation on the WRE Committee to vote on the Deschutes WRE Plan for submittal to Ecology for evaluation and possible rulemaking. Further, the UAC encourages the City Council to support future staff engagement with implementing the Plan and to support the implementation of 11 projects within our Capital Improvement Program.

Donna Buxton, Public Works Department Groundwater Protection Program Manager, is available at dbuxton@ci.olympia.wa.us to answer questions about the Deschutes WRE Plan. I can also be reached at mbuffo@ci.olympia.wa.us regarding UAC's recommendation of support.

Sincerely,



MIKE BUFFO

Chair, Utility Advisory Committee

ec: UAC Members
Eric Christensen, Water Resources Director
Susan Clark, Water Resources Engineering & Planning Supervisor
Donna Buxton, Groundwater Protection Program Manager