

# Public Works Update

9/23/2025

## Today's report: Division highlights

### 1. Division Updates/Highlights

#### *River and Flood*

- Flood Preparedness:
  - Prepared annual mailer for NFIP Community Rating System
- Flood Planning:
  - CDBG grant executed to fund Everson and Nooksack berm feasibility and Sumas Flood Resiliency Planning studies; in the process of retaining consultants for both
  - Performed initial sediment investigations to evaluate the potential impacts of widening the corridor upstream of Everson; in the process of defining next steps and determining feasibility
  - Nooksack Transboundary Flood Initiative. Continued work with Canadian counterparts on transboundary modeling, flood control, and habitat goals.
- Mitigation:
  - Acquisitions: Acquired Sager and Rogge properties. Completed demolition for 6 properties; preparing bid docs for 4 more demolitions. We are still waiting for the award from FEMA for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round acquisition grant.
  - Elevations: All of the homeowner agreements have been signed for the 11 properties that we have funding for under the current grant. Two of the 11 properties are physically in progress, and two others have plans and permits. The remainder of the properties are either in the design/permit phase or have not started the design/permit phase yet. We are still awaiting an award from FEMA on the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of elevation grant.
- Capital Program:
  - Neevel Levee Cougar Creek Fish Passage began construction in mid-July and is anticipated to be completed by early October
  - Acme Woody Revetment Repair project began construction in mid-July and is anticipated to be completed by Aug 22<sup>nd</sup> (ahead of schedule), bulk completed

- Hudson Road Bridge Replacement feasibility project contract was awarded in July and is under contract scoping/negotiations
- Dahlberg Advanced Wetland Mitigation project design contract has been executed with GeoEngineers, and design work is underway
- Ferndale Levee Improvement project 60% design has been completed and is under contract negotiations for amendment for 90% design

## *Natural Resources*

### Fish Passage Program

- Design:
  - Continued work with the consultant design team and salmon co-managers, conducting site assessment, alternatives analysis, and preparation of preliminary designs in the Black Slough area of the South Fork Valley.
  - Fish Passage Portfolio Development (11 culverts). Contract negotiations came in higher than anticipated. Currently working with the granting agency to explore options for additional funding or a potential reduction in scope to prepare preliminary designs and cost estimates for 11 passage corrections located throughout the County.
- Construction program:
  - The contractor started construction of the Kenney Creek at North Fork Road fish barrier removal project in June. To date, the contractor has installed a temporary bridge and bypass detour road to allow road users to pass through the work site. The bridge foundation has been completed and girders are scheduled to be set mid-August. Associated creek work is underway and the poorly functioning fish ladder has been removed.
  - Cougar Creek floodgate and instream wood placement project is currently underway. Construction of this site will restore salmon access to over 8 miles of habitat while correcting deficiencies in the Neveel levee.
- WRIA 1 Fish Barrier Removal Coordination
  - Convened and facilitated meetings of WRIA 1 entities doing fish barrier removal to coordinate efforts, find collaboration opportunities, and share funding needs and resources.
  - Worked with the WRIA 1 Salmon Recovery Lead Entity coordinator to develop the annual update of the WRIA 1 4-Year Fish Barrier Removal Work Plan that reflects the outcomes of the WRIA 1 coordination efforts.
- Whatcom County/Salmon Co-manager Memorandum of Agreement

- Held monthly meetings of the Interagency Culvert Work Group composed of technical staff from Public Works and the Co-managers.
- Prepared a draft technical memorandum outlining prioritization criteria and got Policy Group approval in May. A vetted list of sites and a 5-year work plan are appended to the memo. Currently being routed for signature by all policy representatives.
- Funding
  - Awaiting results on the federal fish passage grant application to NOAA to prepare final designs and construct a new fully passable structure for Bear Creek under Slater Road. Status of the application is still pending with timing of a decision unknown.
- Adjudication
  - Filled vacant Program Specialist position responsible for adjudication outreach.
  - Provided outreach and technical assistance to water right holders.
  - Held outreach events and conducted other outreach activities to inform the public about the adjudication process
  - Assisted the Department of Ecology with their outreach efforts
  - Entered into contract amendment with Cascadia Law Group to fill out water rights claim forms for County-owned water rights
- Technical Studies
  - Continued groundwater-surface water interaction study
  - Completed groundwater model assessment of potential wetland enhancement projects in the upper Bertrand Creek watershed
  - Continued field study of agricultural tile drain management strategies
  - Completed initial investigation of potential water storage projects at Musto Marsh and Springsteen Lake in the South Fork Valley.
- Climate Action
  - Completed Future Shorelines project (2nd phase of sea level rise and riverine vulnerability assessment)
  - Completed Whatcom County Fleet Electrification Study
  - Continued incorporation of climate change into Comprehensive Plan update, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, and development of new climate element, as required by HB 1181
- Lake Whatcom
  - Worked with City of Bellingham to prepare RFP for Lake Whatcom Climate Vulnerability Assessment

- Worked with City of Bellingham on the development of an Aquatic Invasive Species rapid response plan
- Participated in the development of a Forest Management Plan for County and City-owned forest lands in the Lake Whatcom Watershed
- Held second Joint Councils and Commission Meeting on June 4<sup>th</sup>

## *Stormwater Division*

- Capital Improvement Projects
  - Academy Rd Stormwater Improvement Project: All project work is complete and the facilities have been transferred to the City of Bellingham for future operation and maintenance.
  - Charel Terrace Stormwater Outfall Replacement Stabilization Project: The project 90% design was completed and the JARPA application was submitted in Q1 2025. Project coordination with FEMA is ongoing and FEMA is coordinating with the local Tribes on cultural resource management that is required as a permit condition. The archaeological consultation process has stalled with FEMA, which needs to be completed prior to receiving additional funding to complete the construction of the project.
  - Central Shop NPDES Stormwater Improvement Project: The design was finalized and prepared for bid. The bid was opened on 8/12/25 with nine bids received and the lowest apparent bidder being Matia Contractors, Inc. County staff are working on pre-award checks and the bid tabulations. The construction is anticipated to start in September 2025. The remaining work will be completed in 2026.
  - Lora Lane Drainage and Tide Gate Improvements: A consultant has been selected and given the notice to proceed on this project, aiming to be constructed in 2026 concurrently with Birch Bay Leisure Parks projects that connect to the County owned culvert. We have been collaborating with Birch Bay Leisure Park to coordinate a joint project to lessen environmental, archaeological, and community impacts. This project is currently at 60% design and will be submitting for permits late summer 2026.
  - Cedar Hills Culvert Replacement: The County has received FEMA funding to begin preliminary design on a culvert that was damaged during the 2021 flooding event. The design is currently at 90%. Permitting and construction is on hold awaiting clarity from FEMA on their level of funding participation.
  - Austin Court Stormwater Improvements Project: 60% design will continue into

September 2025. Construction is anticipated to begin summer 2026.

- Eagleridge Stormwater Improvements: This project's goal is to retrofit the existing stormwater conveyance system in the residential subdivision to provide phosphorus treatment for runoff entering Lake Whatcom. The engineering consultant has completed an Alternative Analysis Report and is now working on preparing bid ready construction plans. Construction is scheduled for summer 2026.
  - Semiahmoo Drive South & Outfall Improvements: The consulting engineer, Tetra Tech, is actively working on the design and permitting. The project is scheduled for construction in 2026, subject to compliance with permit requirements.
  - Geneva Bioswale:
- 2025 Maintenance/Small Works Summary – NPDES Repair Projects
    - Our NPDES Inspectors are finishing up their mid-year inspections of the MS4 infrastructure, with no substantial small works projects in the coming months.
  - Community Outreach and Education
    - **Reaching the Birch Bay Community**:
      - Staff recently completed the annual BBWARM newsletter, which will be mailed to all BBWARM District ratepayers at the end of August. Content includes a volunteer spotlight, information about stormwater management, upcoming capital improvement projects, and community event information.
      - In addition, the “New Homeowner Guidebook” was updated and mailed out to new homeowners in the Birch Bay watershed in June. The guidebook provides background information about BBWARM, stormwater, and best practices for homeowners.
    - **Summer Pet Waste Outreach**: This summer, staff have participated in 19 pet waste outreach events across the county to help reduce pet waste in public areas and protect local water quality. These included large events such as Day at the Beach, What's the Point, and the Sudden Valley Fair, as well as pop-up booths at popular dog-friendly spots such as trailheads and dog parks. Since June, staff have connected with over 1,200 people, handed out free scooping supplies, and gathered nearly 100 pledges on the community “Scoop Every Poop” board. Nine more events are planned through September, including the upcoming Run With the Chums. Program staff were also featured on the Whatcom County Public Works podcast.

- **Growing the Pet Waste Ambassador Program:** The Scooping Ambassador Program (SAP) continues to grow, with 32 new ambassadors recruited from summer events. These ambassadors receive signs, supplies, and materials to help promote responsible pet waste cleanup in their neighborhoods. To celebrate this community involvement and increase awareness, staff are developing “Scooper Spotlight” stories to highlight ambassador efforts and promote consistent scooping habits.
- **Busting Pet Waste Myths:** A new video series featuring a local veterinarian will help dispel common myths about pet waste and explain its impacts on health and water quality. Short, engaging videos and Facebook Reels are also in the works to boost the program’s reach through fun, shareable content.
- **BBWARM/LWSU details:**
  - Stormwater staff developed a comprehensive map of all past and future capital, small works and special study projects in the BBWARM district during this reporting period. All capital projects listed in the four subwatershed master plans were reviewed, updated, scored, ranked and mapped by staff.
  - A BBWARM advisory committee meeting was held on July 16 and the committee approved the 2026 BBWARM budget proposal and capital improvement plan (Six-Year WRIP).
  - Staff submitted a proposal to the Department of Ecology for a funding opportunity related to 6PPD Stormwater Best Management Practices and Research. Selections will be made in August and funding is available through June 2027. Staff are also working on a proposal for the Stormwater Strategic Initiative Lead (SIL) funding opportunity to help offset costs for the upcoming Lake Whatcom Subwatershed Master Plan II.
  - Staff are working in collaboration with the Sudden Valley Community Association to plan and implement a 6,500 square foot native plant demonstration garden on the shore of Lake Louise along with four interpretive signs about native plants, stormwater, wildfire resilience, pet waste, invasive species. The site is prepped and mulched and plants have been ordered. The community planting party will take place on October 25.
  - 19 private property owners are participating in the Neighborhood Native Landscaping Program in Lake Whatcom and Birch Bay this year. Over 44,000 square feet of lawn will be converted to native plant landscaping during neighborhood planting parties this fall. By August 22, all 19 properties will be prepped and mulched.
  - The Phase 2 Climate Vulnerability & Shoreline Management Solutions Project was completed in July. The final report and accompanying webmap focusing on future flood risk and adaptation strategies are being reviewed by County Council.
  - Staff are working with Birch Bay Village on a collaborative stormwater improvement project that would improve drainage and reduce flooding in the vicinity of Birch Point Road and Salish Road/Roger’s Slough. An addendum to the

Memorandum of Understanding between the county and BBV, outlining both party's roles and responsibilities, is under development.

- FLO Analytics is working on the development of a customized GIS app/dashboard for the current and historical fee roll data for BBWARM and LWSU. This will allow staff to quickly look up and respond to customer inquiries and provide accurate data on service fee calculations and maps of impervious surface area.
- Staff are working on hiring a consultant to develop a subwatershed master plan within Lake Whatcom. This plan will cover the areas that have not been covered by the previous four plans and will focus on water quality, conveyance and habitat improvement projects.

### *Engineering Division*

- **2025 YTD Work and Major Items of Note**
  - N. Lake Samish Bridge Replacement –Ongoing
  - North Fork Road/Kenney Creek Fish Passage – Ongoing
  - Swift Creek wetland, sediment trap and channel maintenance – Ongoing
  - Everson Goshen Paver from Smith to SR 544 - Complete
  - FEMA Fix to Beach Ave & Island Dr - Ongoing
  - 2024 Small Area Paver – Closeout Ongoing
  - Birch Bay Beach Park Crosswalk
  - 2025 Traffic Count Program – Ongoing
  - Radar Speed trailer rotation deployments
  - Expansion of Alderwood Elementary School Zone
  - 6 Year TIP/ARP Development
  - Reviews of approximately 105 active permits, along with 71 pre-applications
  - 520 encroachment permits have been processed

### *Central Shop (M&O and ER&R)*

M/O

- **Lane miles striped in white and yellow:** 785.75 miles of white, 415.1 miles of yellow
- **Miles of chipseal completed:** 39.96 total miles
- **Ditching** 12.19 miles YTD.
- **NPDES:** For the date range of 5/1/25 to current: Cleaned: 393 catch basins, repaired 22 catch basins. Additional maintenance - replaced Austin St. Mulch in bioretention swale
- **Recruitment:** 6 RMW positions frozen, actively recruiting for 5 RMW's, Operator and Sign Lead filled/to be filled.

## ER&R

- **Status of UST removal:** Bid is advertised (closes 9/9, \$1.4-\$1.7 engineer's estimate). Still hoping to get the work done later this fall. All permits have had applications completed and are pending review. No issues are expected with the permits.
- **CS Stormwater status:** Bid closed, low bid was \$1.2 almost \$400k below the engineer's estimate. Pending bid evaluation and award in the 3rd quarter.
- **Recruitment:** ER&R - Mechanic position is being flown now. Contract position is still in a holding pattern. All other positions have been filled.
- **Assetworks:** Data loadout is ongoing, the majority of data anticipated to be completely loaded by 8/15. On-site training pending, still targeting an October go-live. Hardware purchase pending.
- **Equipment purchases:** The purchase list for 2025 was a little overly ambitious, given the UST and AW projects. Will have to push some to 2026, but there are no concerns on impacts to service due to this.
- **Stores number of invoices processed:** 3016 invoices YTD
- **Shop work order count:** 1978 work orders completed YTD as of 8/14/25

## Ferry Division

- An Executive Order has established new ferry rates, which became effective on August 23, 2025
- The new Ferry and Terminal modernization project is proceeding to final design with KPFF, NEPA process underway, MARAD \$25M grant award not yet obligated, hopeful to hear from USDOT-MARAD before Oct 1<sup>st</sup>. Working on with the exec office on TIFA loan pre-application, have submitted environmental permits to the Corps of Army Engineers
- all terminal cables (hoists and counterweights) replaced 8/22-8/23 (5-year rotation)
- Kelsey McLane and Dan Ohms have successfully completed the captain licensing process and are now approved to operate the Whatcom Chief.
- The county has filed a response brief for the ferry lawsuit appeal
- Management's preparing for IBU/MMP union negotiations, contract expires at year end
- Updated policies and procedures to ensure better loading protocols to reduce vehicle accidents
- Made traffic improvements to the merging and queuing lanes at the Gooseberry Terminal to improve vehicle loading.



## Administration

- Finance/Accounting
  - Prepare the Mid-biennium budget early
    - 2026 Road Fund cash flow analysis pending
    - executed the first capital reimbursement loan
  - Complete the Mid mid-biennium inventory of services
- Construction Apprenticeship Program (CAP)/Title VI- Civil Rights Act/PW Pubic Records
  - County-wide Title VI plan now available in Spanish. Planning to produce a version in Russian.
  - CAP- 3 active projects now, on target to meet 15% apprentice goal. Granite Construction achieved the goal for the Everson Goshen paver project this year. A full report on CAP for 2025 will be provided to Council in the first quarter of next year.
  - Continue to receive an above-average amount of PDRs- 1/3 or more of PW are ferry-related
- Safety and Training Division
  - Extensive effort to review and update all existing PW Departments' policies, approx. 75 of them. The policy team has completed review and updates to 85% and plan to have final drafts for Director review by Oct 1<sup>st</sup> and final approval by December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- Environmental Services (Permitting)
  - Secured a 5-year programmatic Archy permit, which allows for sign replacement in Pt. Roberts
  - Successful fish removal and exclusion effort for Kenny Creek bridge project- included partnering with Lummi Natural Resources, which provided technical support.
  - Application accepted for Washington Conservation Corps hours for habitat restoration/mitigation efforts for 2025 and 2026, despite significant federal funding cuts to Teach America.
- Communications:
  - Participated in the recent County Open House with information representing all of our divisions.
    - In-person conversations and explanations on how to use our outreach tools, like the County Travel Planner, and how to sign up for our Road Closures & Restrictions alert list.
  - Speaking of conversations...our podcast continues to grow as a tool for us to explain our work in a conversational and approachable way.

- Recent episodes include: summer construction updates, road & flood fund budget health, and pet waste/water quality outreach
- Holding Fall project ribbon cuttings for elected officials and media to help get our accomplishments out to the public.
- Participating in county-wide communications networking groups to better collaborate with and inform our partners and stakeholders.
- Continue to use a variety of outreach & engagement tools to meet folks where they are, including:
  - Social media-- Facebook, X, and joining neighborhood FB groups
  - Nextdoor
  - Email/text alerts and E-newsletters
  - Mailed newsletters (such as the annual flood newsletter about to be released)
  - Podcast & video updates

## 2. Questions