



# BBWARM Birch Bay Watershed and Aquatic Resources Management District

Whatcom County Public Works: (360) 778.6230 | [bbwarm.whatcomcounty.org](http://bbwarm.whatcomcounty.org)

May 22, 2026

Whatcom County Council  
311 Grand Avenue  
Bellingham, WA 98225

Subject: BBWARM Program Funding Plan

Dear Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of the Birch Bay Watershed and Aquatic Resources Management District (BBWARM) Advisory Committee, we respectfully request that the Whatcom County Council, serving in its role as the Flood Control Zone District Board of Supervisors, ensure that a portion of Real Estate Excise Tax (REET II) revenues continues to be allocated to BBWARM for implementation of capital improvement projects in the 2027-2028 budget cycle. This funding plays a critical role in addressing failing stormwater infrastructure, reducing flood risks, and protecting water quality and aquatic habitat in the Birch Bay watershed.

BBWARM has historically relied on REET funding to carry out its programs. From 2016 through 2024, the district received approximately \$1 million in REET II funds, which supported the construction of major capital improvement projects. Because the Birch Bay community depends on multiple funding sources to sustain a comprehensive capital program, continued REET support remains critical for managing drainage, reducing flooding and improving water quality.

Additionally, a comprehensive rate study completed in 2024 incorporated \$200,000 in annual REET II funding and approximately \$445,000 per year from the Road Fund as key supplemental revenue sources for BBWARM over the next decade. The adopted service rates were based on the assumption that these external funds would remain available. Without them, the scope and effectiveness of essential programs and services provided to the community will be significantly impacted.

Maintaining REET funding as planned will enable BBWARM to continue implementing high-priority capital projects that support with the county's goals for environmental protection, climate resilience, and long-term infrastructure stewardship.

Recent and active BBWARM capital projects illustrate the value of this investment, including:

- **Holeman Avenue Stormwater Improvements (2024):** Replacement of undersized drainage infrastructure, installation of new storm drains, and ditch restoration to reduce roadway flooding and erosion risks along a sensitive bluff area.

- **Semiahmoo Drive South and Outfall Improvements (anticipated construction 2027):** Upgrades to aging conveyance and outfall infrastructure to reduce chronic flooding and improve road safety and system resilience.
- **Birch Bay Village Stormwater Improvements (anticipated construction 2027):** Cost-share project with BBV to upsize existing culverts and install new pipe and catch basins to reduce flooding.
- **Lora Lane Drainage and Tide Gate Modifications (construction TBD):** Modifications to improve flood capacity, enhance tide gate function, protect road infrastructure and better balance flood protection with aquatic habitat considerations.

These projects provide measurable public benefits, including reduced flood risk to homes and roads, improved marine and freshwater water quality, protection of public and private infrastructure, and support for fisheries and shoreline habitat. BBWARM funds are also used to support program development and planning, maintenance and small works, education and outreach, water quality monitoring and habitat improvement projects.

If REET funding is not available or cannot be restored in the upcoming budget cycle, the BBWARM Advisory Committee respectfully asks the Council to consider approving the 1% increase for the Flood Control Zone District tax and also consider approving the release of the banked capacity in order to support BBWARM capital improvement projects. Access to this funding mechanism would offer a practical alternative to maintain momentum in priority flood risk reduction and stormwater management projects in the Birch Bay area.

Continued investment in BBWARM's capital program is essential to protecting community assets, advancing watershed-scale solutions, and ensuring that prior planning and design work can be fully implemented. We appreciate the Council's consideration of this request and thank you for your ongoing commitment to effective and forward-looking resource management.

The BBWARM Advisory Committee would welcome the opportunity to provide additional project details or to discuss these funding needs further.

Sincerely,

Birch Bay Watershed and Aquatic Resources Management (BBWARM) District Advisory Committee

*Jane Mauk*

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Chair, BBWARM Advisory Committee

Members: Michael Allan, Sherrie Jarrett-Green, Rebecca Hardie