

# Lake Whatcom Homeowner Incentive Program Update

Whatcom County Council

Water Work Session

November 15, 2022



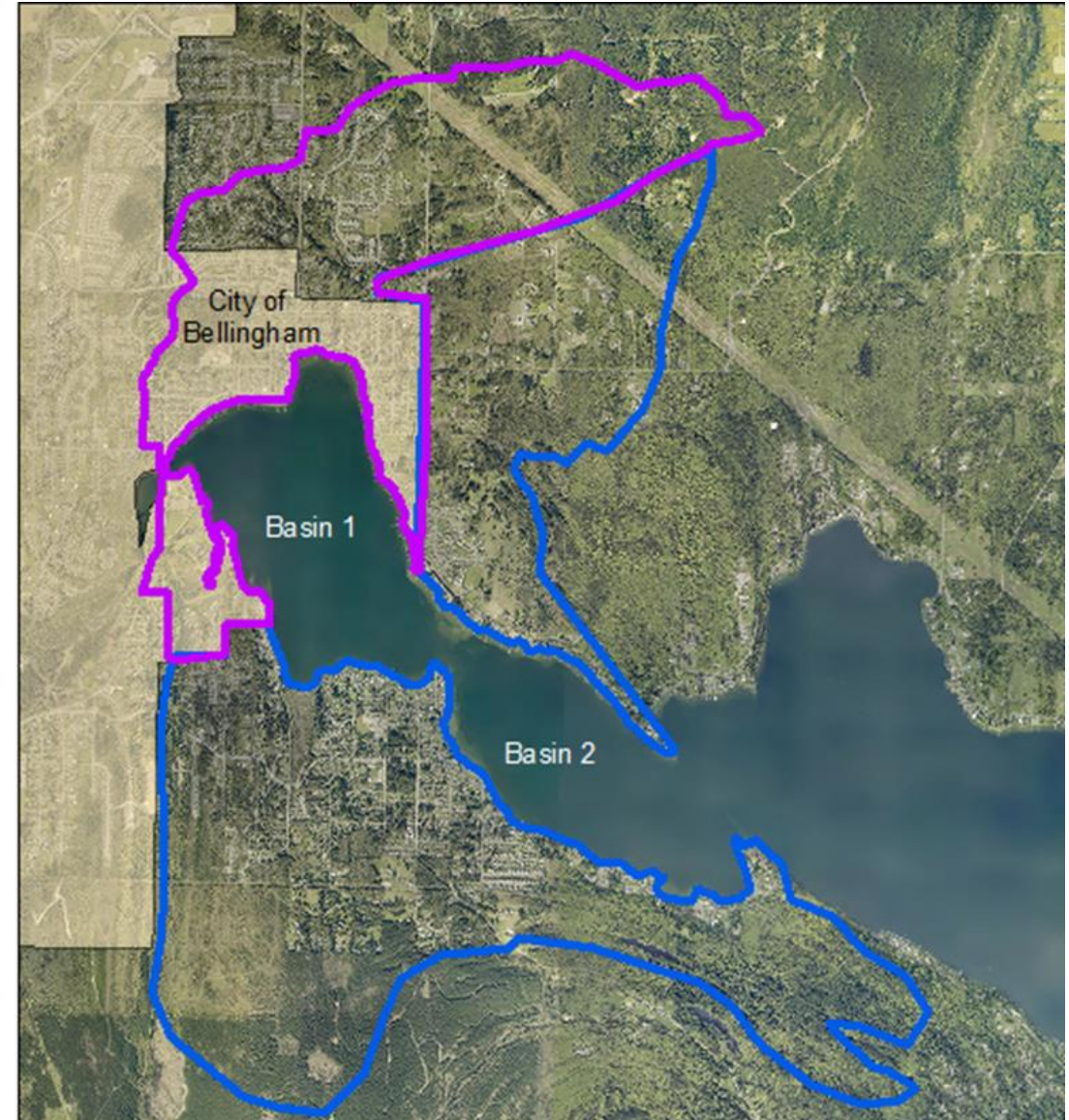
# Brief HIP History

## ➤ HIP Pilot (HIP 1.0) 2011-2015

- WA State Dept. Ecology Grant funded
- Basin 1 (mostly)
- 16 BMPs, single program
- City & County staffed

## ➤ HIP 2.0 2017-2020

- City funded with \$100,000 from County (Flood Fund)
- Basins 1 & 2
- 5 BMPs, two-tier program
- Whatcom Conservation District staffed + City + County





# Brief HIP History

## ➤ 2021 Program Changes

- County funds County HIP
  - 50/50 Flood Fund & Lake Whatcom Stormwater Utility
  - Similar but different programs County and City
- Streamlined and simplified
- Expands to Basin 3
- Single program for all + larger project options for shoreline
- Focus on native landscaping
- Reduced barriers
  - Maintenance agreement only
  - Options for labor reimbursement



# 2021-2022 County HIP Update

## ➤ Interest > staff capacity

- ~200 inquiries via website 2021-2022
- 32 new participants in 2021
- 11 new participants spring 2022
- April 2022 pause on new sign ups

## ➤ Focus on helping homeowners complete projects

## ➤ Neighborhood Native Landscaping Pilot

- Test new model designed to reduce barriers to completing projects
- Offered to select HIP participants in Sudden Valley
- 4 households
- ~14,000 ft<sup>2</sup>
- Also piloted in Birch Bay watershed

# HIP Challenges

- Many interested homeowners engage but never complete a project
  - > 7 homeowners engaged: 1 completed project (2017-2020)
  - Similar trend observed 2021-2022
  - Hard to overcome barriers to participation
  - 35% homeowners with cancelled projects report challenges with cost, time, other priorities, complexity
- Significant staff resources required
  - ~ 0.6 - 1.0 FTE Whatcom Conservation District
  - ~ 0.25-0.5 FTE Whatcom County



# Neighborhood Native Landscaping Pilot

- Same end result
  - Native Landscaping BMP
  - Maintenance agreement
- Easier for homeowner
  - Plans, permits provided
  - Mulch, plants provided
  - No reimbursement process
- Promotes watershed stewardship
  - Planting party; neighborhood cluster
- Ensures project completion
  - Improves return on investment of staff resources



HIP		Neighborhood Native Landscaping	
Average area improved/year (County 2017-2021)	31,674 ft <sup>2</sup>	Proposed area improved/year (2023)	20,000 ft <sup>2</sup>
Annual program cost/ft <sup>2</sup> improved (City & County 2017-2020)	\$3.50 - \$4.50	Annual program cost/ft <sup>2</sup> improved (proposed 2023 scope of work)	\$2.70
Reimbursement Rate	\$1.30/ft <sup>2</sup>	Materials cost (2022 pilot actual costs)	\$1.45/ft <sup>2</sup>

# 2023 Plan

- Work with engaged homeowners to complete HIP projects
  - Close out all by end 2024
  - ~35 eligible participants
- Transition to Neighborhood Native Landscaping Project Model
  - 2023 target 20,000 ft<sup>2</sup>
  - Evaluate and set 2024 targets
- Initiate Private Stormwater System (PSS) Retrofits Program
  - Evaluate 4-5 high priority systems for water quality improvement potential
  - Subwatershed Master Plan Evaluation
    - Evaluate PSS systems in Lake Whatcom subbasins with subwatershed master planning



# Lake Whatcom Stormwater Utility

- Funding study (2018-2019) identified a need for HIP / Residential Stormwater Retrofits
  - Included future neighborhood-scale retrofits of stormwater facilities
- 2023 plan includes HIP, Neighborhood Native Landscaping, and neighborhood-scale retrofits

Questions?