

# SNOHOMISH COUNTY SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT UTILITY CONSOLIDATION

## I. Challenge

Under the existing business model, the Surface Water Management (SWM) utility is unable to maintain the current level of service countywide and ensure countywide compliance with legal requirements.

## II. Strategy

SWM has a three part strategy to address this challenge: 1) identify efficiencies; 2) clarify SWM services and target levels of service; and 3) align future revenues and utility rates to provide those services.

## III. Proposal (Addresses Strategy 1)

SWM proposes to consolidate the current three Watershed Management Areas (WMAs) into one surface water management utility district.

## IV. Background

SWM is examining and refining business operations to improve efficiency. We've already adopted two more effective tracking and data management systems - *Cartegraph*, for drainage system maintenance, and *Surface Water Online*, for water quality data. We have also considered other means of achieving efficiency, but our analysis shows that greatest benefit would be realized by combining our three WMAs. Our current practice of having three separate areas has led to high administrative costs, inequitable levels of service, a complicated budget and a lack of flexibility to address county priorities.

## V. Benefits

Having one surface water management utility district will:

- **Reduce administrative costs.**
  - Estimated savings of \$480,000 will benefit services in all areas of the county
- **Make the SWM budget more transparent.**
  - Annual reporting of where we work improves accountability
- **Provide flexibility to address council and ratepayer priorities.**
  - Examples of high priority issues include urban flooding, shoreline erosion or landslides, and river flooding
- **Provide equitable levels of service.**
  - High priority services, including ESA and NPDES compliance, can be provided countywide