

SOAP Webinar 2 – Question & Answer

Question 1: *Can the county harness methane emissions from county-owned landfills?*

Answer: The county has already investigated this option at the former Cathcart landfill that was closed and capped in 1992. There is methane capture and destruction equipment installed at the site however the landfill's small size and age both contribute to making re-use of captured methane somewhat infeasible. A canola seed crusher facility was previously installed at the site with the ability to harness captured methane gas however there was little interest in using the equipment.

Q2: *Do the emissions values from solid waste produced at county facilities include the methane emissions from the breakdown of that waste even though we've transported the waste outside of the county to another landfill?*

A: Yes, the accounted emissions from solid waste in the county's greenhouse gas report include the full lifecycle emissions of that waste.

Q3: *With regard to the COVID pandemic, many county employees are now working from home rather than in the office, should the county take emissions from employee's home energy use into account in the greenhouse gas report?*

A: While energy use at the county offices and other locations has been impacted by employees working remotely, all the buildings are still heated and cooled in a similar manner for the essential staff that are on site. Regarding home energy use, the county has no way to accurately monitor the usage of work-related functions at the homes of all employees. A rough estimate could be possible in future emissions reports however especially if remote work capabilities remain commonplace.

Q4: *How does the new Courthouse addition impact the greenhouse gas emissions goals?*

A: It's difficult to know exactly what the impact will be until an emissions inventory is completed after the Courthouse addition is occupied and operating at the originally planned capacity. The expectation though is that since the county added 28,000 square feet of new space, that county energy use will go up. However, the Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) HVAC system that was installed in the addition is highly efficient and uses an electric fuel source which is largely carbon-free within Snohomish County.

Q5: *Who else (besides county employees) will be asked to provide input on the SOAP?*

A: Community stakeholders, County Council, the County Executive and other elected officials will have the opportunity to provide input as well as county employees.

Q6: *Is there an effort to meet LEED goals for new building construction or existing building retrofits?*

A: Yes, as mentioned in the first SOAP webinar, a Green & High Performance Building ordinance was passed in 2020 (SCC 3.06) that requires all county-owned or financed construction projects to meet LEED Gold standards for new construction and major remodels of existing buildings. The ordinance also requires that projects cannot use fossil fuels as a primary energy source and that projects use a Life Cycle Cost Assessment (LCCA) in the planning stages make decisions based on the full lifecycle impacts to costs and emissions. The accompanying policy has yet to be finalized but is in progress.

Q7: *Do the greenhouse gas emissions values also account for emissions from shipping and transportation of goods received by the county?*

A: The reported values in the greenhouse gas inventory do not include emissions from shipping and transportation of goods. This is what is referred to as “Scope 3” emissions. However, the inventory report does address Scope 3 emissions at a high level and a rough estimate of the county’s Scope 3 emissions are provided. This estimate is not included in the reported emissions totals from the 2018 greenhouse gas inventory.

Q8: *Why does Snohomish County not have a food or yard waste collection program?*

A: For government operations, some sites do have food waste collection where there is a large enough volume of food waste produced. This includes the county campus café, jails, and the Evergreen Fair Park during the 12-day Evergreen State Fair. Many county sites also have yard waste collection which is utilized by gardening staff. The food and yard waste is collected by Cedar Grove for composting and reuse. Assessments have been done in the past regarding expanding food waste collection to more site but were determined to not yet be cost-effective with limited environmental benefit due to the low volume of waste, though this can certainly be re-assessed in the future.

Questions regarding food or yard waste collection for the Snohomish County community at large are best addressed by the county’s Solid Waste division.