

Half-Page Condensed Version

Lewis County Drinking Water Laboratory – Key Issues

Costs

- The lab will require general fund from the county in excess of the originally quoted \$10,000 per year. Unknown supply cost increases and additional staff time will impact the general fund need.
- Most expensive lab in Western Washington for coliform and nitrate testing.
- Competes at a disadvantage vs. Thurston County, ALS, Vanguard, and Water Management Labs.

Equipment

- Specialized equipment cost rose from \$3,000 → \$8,500.
- Re modeling costs are going to be more than the original amount of \$50,000
- These costs increases will require additional general fund contribution.

Staffing

- No technician; other staff covering which is a cost increase.
- Increase in errors of testing due to current staff unfamiliarity
- New hire will have test errors due to learning curve
- Have had 3 qualified applicants apply. 1 is out of state.
- East end sample pick up is problematic as it requires 3 hours and is often the only task.

Service Demand

- 62% lower than September 2024(=295).

Alternatives

- Clients (Morton, TransAlta, Chehalis, Boistfort, Vader/Enchanted Valley) could send samples to Thurston County, ALS, Vanguard, or Water Management Labs.

Conclusion

The costs of the water lab and reduction in sampling will adversely impact the budget. RAW samples are not financially viable due to the nature of the work and the amount of samples being done.

Water Lab Operations update

- **Fiscal Stewardship**
 - Lab is the *most expensive in Western Washington* — as a result in increase fees to recoup costs
 - Equipment costs have *tripled* (from \$3,000 to \$8,500)
 - Competition with private sector options that have a lower operating and direct costs to consumers.
- **Staffing & Efficiency**
 - Sampling errors are occurring due to loss of long time staff and new staff learning curve. Errors will likely continue for an undermined amount of time when position specific staff are hired due to learning curve.
 - Utilization of existing EH staff distracts from their primary and essential roles.
- **Sampling trends**
 - Demand down 38% since September 2024.
 - The seven RAW clients are 20% of staff time. 7-8 hours for the 7.
 - Expected increase in general funds ask due decrease water lab revenue
- **Consideration of Alternatives Exist**
 - Thurston County has a fee supported water lab, ALS Lab, Vanguard Lab, and Water Management Lab are certified, established private sector alternatives.