



Lewis County's Drinking Water Laboratory; Proposals for moving forward in Fiscal Year 2025 Quick Sheet

Summary- The Lewis County Drinking Water Laboratory is over budget for 2025. While sample prices were increased to cover rising labor and supply costs, the higher prices have led to a significant drop in demand.

To address the deficit, three options are proposed: receiving additional General Fund support, reducing staffing costs by limiting operations to two weeks per month (Monday–Wednesday, during the first two full weeks of each month), or closing the lab.

Problem Overview- In January 2025, sample fees for bacteria and nitrate testing rose from \$42 to \$65 to offset supply and staffing cost increases and eliminate General Fund dependence. The Fund previously covered approximately 50% of Lab expenses, which was reduced to 20% in 2023 and fully eliminated in 2024.

Despite these changes, supply and labor costs continue to rise. The 2025 price hike resulted in a 29% decline in sample submissions by April (812 samples vs. 1,148 in 2024), significantly reducing revenue.

Revenue - In 2025, \$53,106 in revenue was received between January and April. Based on these numbers, the estimated total revenue for 2025 would be \$144,224. From 2020 through 2024 and average of 37% of annual revenue was received each year between January and April.

Expenditure - January through April 2025: \$61,873 in program costs were incurred. Extrapolating that amount reveals an anticipated expenditure of \$185,621, resulting in a shortfall of \$41,397.

However, this does not reflect the approximate supplies cost of \$20,000. An order of supplies was done in May and another would be ordered before year end.

Adding these costs results in the anticipated shortfall of \$61,397.



Lewis County's Drinking Water Laboratory;

Operational Options

The most significant expenditure for the Drinking Water Laboratory is staffing costs. The total staffing costs for the Drinking Water Laboratory in 2024 were \$110,485.10, with \$81,534.89 of that cost attributed to the Laboratory Technician, who currently works 0.8 FTE. These costs do not include indirect expenses.

Expenditures by category

	Jan-Apr actual costs
Salaries	\$ 35,045.64
Supplies	\$ 2,481.22
Professional Services	\$ 1,168.44
Other costs	\$ 7,437.88
Indirect costs	\$ 15,740.64
Total	\$ 61,873.82

Proposal to Maintain Current Operational Days with Supplemental General Funds - Maintaining current laboratory operations at current levels and days of operation would require additional funds, projected for 2025 to be approximately **\$61,873.82**. This additional revenue source would need to come from general funds. Including general funds as a revenue source is the only way to sustain current Lab operations.

Proposal to Reduce Hours but Maintain Drinking Water Laboratory Service- An alternative proposal that would allow the continuance of laboratory operations is to limit the days of laboratory service to the first two full weeks of each month, which provides for Lewis County Residents to continue to submit samples to the lab, but at a restricted schedule. The days and hours of operation during those weeks would remain the same: Monday through Wednesday, 8 am to 4:30 pm. This reduction would significantly reduce staffing costs, as the Laboratory Technician position would become a part-time position (0.4 FTE) and no longer be eligible for benefits, resulting in a decrease from \$81,534.89 to approximately \$50,959.31 (based on 2024 costs, excluding indirect costs).

This proposed change would take effect on August 1, 2025, providing sufficient time to inform County residents and the impacted community of the change in schedules for the Drinking Water Laboratory and to adjust their sampling needs to accommodate the new schedule. Notifications regarding the



schedule change would be posted at both the Public Health and Social Services Building and the Community Development Building, as well as on the Lewis County Water Lab website, showing the days the lab is open each month for the 2025 calendar year.

Proposal to Close the Drinking Water Laboratory - Due to the budget shortfall mentioned above and the reduced number of samples received for analysis by the lab, the loss of laboratory services, in conjunction with the retirement of our Laboratory Technician, is the simplest option. There are three public laboratories and one county-run laboratory within reasonable driving distance for residents of Lewis County that provide Ecology-accredited water analysis at a lower cost than the Lewis County Lab can offer. Below is a table listing the closest laboratories, their distances from the Lewis County Historic Courthouse building, sample costs, and days of operation.

Laboratory Name	Distance (from Historic Courthouse)	Bacteria Sample Cost	Nitrate Sample Cost	Days of Operation
Thurston County Water Laboratory	30.5 miles	\$32	\$32	Bacteria: Mon-Thu Nitrates: Mon-Tues
Vanguard (Olympia)	29.1 miles	\$40	\$40	Mon-Fri
ALS Environmental	39.9 miles	\$35 (\$50 fee)	\$31	Mon-Fri
Water Management	55.4 miles	\$33	\$36	Mon-Sat

Conclusion - Due to the rising costs of laboratory supplies and staffing, the revenue projections for 2025 have a budget shortfall of **\$61,873.82**, requiring a decision on whether to allocate general funds to its revenue for continued operation at current levels, reduce its available days each month, or close the lab.