

# Regional Water Cooperative of Pierce County

(letter submitted by email to Austin Melcher)



Austin Melcher  
June 21, 2024

*City of Bonney Lake*  
*Camino Water Association*  
*Covington Water District*  
*City of Fife*  
*Firgrove Mutual*  
*Fox Island Mutual Water Association*  
*Fruitland Mutual*  
*Graham Hill Mutual*  
*Lake Josephine Riviera*  
*Lakewood Water District*  
*City of Milton*  
*Mt. View-Edgewood Water Co.*  
*City of Pacific*  
*Parkland Light and Water*  
*Peninsula Light*  
*Pierce County Public Works and Utilities*  
*City of Puyallup*  
*Town of Roy*  
*Spanaway Water*  
*Town of Steilacoom*  
*Summit Water & Supply*  
*City of Sumner*  
*City of Tacoma Water*  
*Public Utility District No. 1 of Thurston County*  
*Valley Water District*  
*Washington Water Service Co.*

Department of Ecology  
Water Resources Program  
P.O. Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

RE: Comments on Proposed Revisions to 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of Municipal Water Policy 2030

Dear Mr. Melcher and the Water Resources Program, Department of Ecology,

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Dept. of Ecology's 2<sup>nd</sup> review draft of Policy 2030. The Regional Water Cooperative of Pierce County is made up of municipal water suppliers serving a population of over 850,000 in Pierce County and 104,000 in eight additional counties. The diversity of our public water systems is also reflected in the governance under which the individual systems operate including cities, public utility districts, special purpose districts, non-profit mutual, cooperatives, for profit companies, and association systems. The policy is of great importance to our membership, the public we currently serve, and the population growth for which we must plan public water supply.

The Regional Water Cooperative of Pierce County, as a member of the Washington Water Utilities Council (WWUC), also endorses and supports the draft Policy 2030 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comments made on behalf of the WWUC. We are disappointed by the agency's failure to address comments and rejection of the critical perspectives provided by our organization and those of other public water supply organizations. Similarly, we are disappointed by the agency's failure to provide direct responses to those public water supplier's comments.

The second draft of the policy continues to disregard the spirit and intent of the 2003 Municipal Water Law (MWL) to provide certainty and flexibility to municipal water suppliers. This disregard critically limits the ability of Cooperative members to address the OFM's anticipated 16 to 50 percent Pierce County growth over the next thirty years. The policy as written, will also limit utilities' ability to address the legislature's actions supporting greater housing densities and the acknowledged shortage of housing in the Puget Sound.

Again, the draft policy increases uncertainty and restricts flexibility rather than providing the certainty and flexibility intended in the Municipal Water Law. Further, the policy continues to include requirements and evaluations beyond those authorized by statute and case law. The agency's interpretations of the Municipal Water Law should be subject to and supported by rulemaking rather

than simply in policy. These interpretations create the potential for litigation, judicial review, and unnecessary costs.

As written, the policy limits the flexible use of municipal water rights to serve the State's growing population, emerging contaminants, and the often needed water system consolidations. This is especially critical for cooperative members as they work to address the water supply needs resulting from growth embodied in growth management plans, greater densities created by middle housing efforts, and responding to areas with PFAS contamination.

The Cooperative's members believe the 2003 Municipal Water Law provides a means to address the needs of our growing population but feel that Policy 2030, as written, restricts our ability to provide the public we serve with safe, reliable water supply at a reasonable cost while protecting the environment. Specific comments regarding this policy are included in the enclosed comment letter on the policy's first draft. Policy 2030's restrictions, unless revised to consider the comments made by the utility community, only serves a hindrance to the ability to supply the public's water needs.

Sincerely and respectfully submitted,

*Larry Jones*

Larry Jones  
President, Regional Water Cooperative of Pierce County

*Jeff Johnson*

Jeff Johnson  
Executive director, Regional Water Cooperative of Pierce County

CC:

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