

Covington Water District Strategic Plan 2010

Introduction

Covington Water District is a special purpose district responsible for providing high-quality, safe and reliable drinking water to customers within its service area boundary. The District operations are governed by regulations implemented and enforced by Washington State Department of Health. The District derives its authority from the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Title 57. A five member elected Board of Commissioners sets policy within the framework of state statutes and local ordinances.

The District was formed in 1960 and has grown to over 16,400 customers. Its boundaries are roughly the City of Covington, the southern portion of the City of Maple Valley, the northwest portion of the City of Black Diamond, and unincorporated portions of King County south to the Green River. Its service area covers approximately 55 square miles.

Sources of supply and satellite systems

The District is supplied with water from multiple sources. Twelve (12) production wells from two well fields, water rights developed in partnership with the City of Tacoma and water purchased from the City of Auburn serve its customers. Two independent systems in Ravensdale and Sugarloaf in the eastern portion of the District are owned by the District and operated as satellite systems. As a groundwater producer the District is responsible for water quality treatment along with planning for and distributing all water to its customers.

Guiding Principles

The District's Mission and Core Values, detailed further in the plan, guide our selection of Strategic Initiatives. The implementation of Strategic Initiatives drives our technological, managerial and operational improvements which in turn enhance our basic water service, quality and reliability. This is the first year staff have set formal goals for strategic planning, and they have embraced the challenges of continuous improvement.

Strategic Planning Process

Covington Water District employees developed Strategic Initiatives in 2008 and have been implementing the goals since then. The initial effort (Phase I) was to identify those policies and practices which could be easily modified to reflect the attributes of an 'Employer of Choice.' This discussion was followed by further identification and prioritization of opportunities for individual and organizational changes (Phase 2).

Some Initiatives were realized within a short time frame, others span multiple years. In 2009 the following Initiatives were completed: update of the District Administrative Code, analysis and update of Street Light account policy, and identification of a SCADA system training and maintenance program, including hire of a SCADA technician. Significant progress was also achieved on the balance of the Initiatives. For example, the GIS program has started and a technician is dedicated to developing a robust system that integrates geographic and hydraulic information; standard operating procedures have been written for a dozen key operations and more are in development; the Emergency Plan is near completion; and communication improvement steps have been identified for implementation in 2010.

Funding for each Strategic Initiative is requested during the annual budget process, although not all Strategic Initiatives require additional funding. Some of the funding required is capital, while others focus on the use of staff time and operational funds. Developing strategies to implement the Initiatives has had the beneficial outcome of improving District-wide communications and team work.

Strategic Initiatives

Database Management for District’s Water System	1) Develop geographic database 2) Manage risk of critical assets, and 3) Improve design accuracy and response time
Emergency Management Facility Improvements	Train for emergency operations and implement plan Develop 10-year expansion plan; analyze energy consumption and needs
SCADA Improvements	Upgrade telemetry to industry standards
Records Management	Improve document management and control
Standardize Processes	Define consistent and timely responses
Communication Improvements	Establish or improve with internal and external customers

A utility “Employer of Choice” is identified as that agency which clarifies and supports attainable goals and empowers its employees to meet the goals. In addition, an “Employer of Choice” provides opportunities for employees’ self-improvement as well as organizational improvement. Covington Water District strives to be that “Employer of Choice” by enabling its employees to meet the challenges and opportunities identified over-and-above their regular duties of providing safe drinking water for its current and future customers.

Gwenn Maxfield
General Manager
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