



## Staff Report

November 2, 2020 Council Workshop

Importance of Lacamas Watershed Draft Resolution

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**BACKGROUND:** The water quality within Lacamas Lake, Round Lake and Fallen Leaf Lake (“Lakes”) has been declining over time. Based on a series of investigations dating back to the early 1980s, Lacamas and Round Lakes are categorized as “eutrophic” – characterized by an abundant accumulation of nutrients that support a dense growth of algae and other organisms. The last comprehensive report on the condition of Lacamas Lake was completed by the County in 2004 (*Lacamas Lake: Nutrient Loading and In-Lake Conditions, April 2004*) with the last significant update by Clark County occurring in 2007 (*Monitoring Report Lacamas Lake Annual Data Summary for 2007*). The referenced documents are attached for reference. Fallen Leaf Lake had confirmed algal blooms in late 2019; the first time algal blooms have been documented for that water body.

Grant-funded activities implemented by Clark County and other agencies between 1987 and 2001 reduced agricultural phosphorus sources and increased public awareness of lake issues. Water quality monitoring indicated that phosphorus concentrations in the lake and its major tributary, Lacamas Creek, were substantially reduced during this period. Despite these improvements, however, water quality problems persist in Lacamas Lake. There are no recent studies or other data that would provide specifics of the current condition of the Lakes; however, based on the increasing number, frequency and duration of algal blooms, all indications point towards a further decline of the water quality.

It is noted the City is currently partnering with Clark County Public Works to complete sampling and monitoring efforts on Fallen Leaf Lake as a starting point to try and determine causes of water quality degradation. As an additional item of interest, in 2010-11, the Department of Ecology gathered data in the Lacamas Basin tributaries to support work on developing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Basin and within Lacamas Creek, up to the point where it discharges into Lacamas Lake. However, Ecology has not finished those efforts, and now believe that work may not begin until possibly the 2023 timeframe.

**SUMMARY:** The attached 2007 Monitoring Report states that “Public and agency activities to improve Lacamas Lake have diminished since the major grant-funded restoration efforts concluded in 2001. Renewed community interest and support would encourage further measures by state and local agencies to build on earlier successes in improving Lacamas Lake.”

As discussed at previous City Council Workshops, there is significant renewed community interest and momentum around the topic of improving the water quality in the Lakes. Staff has prepared the attached DRAFT Resolution for review and discussion by the City Council to assist the Council in confirming the desire to use City resources, likely in partnership with the County and various State agencies, to further investigate and improve water quality in the Watershed.

### **EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS:**

- *What are the desired results and outcomes for this agenda item?*
  - Adoption of this Resolution will confirm the City Council's desire to spend staff time and other resources on what will likely be a very long-term effort to improve and manager water quality within the Lakes.
- *What's the data? What does the data tell us?*
  - Presence of continued algal blooms over the past several years has provided information suggesting the water quality within the Lakes continues to decline. Without significant efforts on the part of the City, County and State agencies, water quality will not likely improve on its own.
- *How have communities been engaged? Are there opportunities to expand engagement?*
  - This Resolution prioritizes engagement through the formation and use of an ad-hoc citizen committee to help develop and guide the City in the short and long-term goals of this effort.
- *Who will benefit from, or be burdened by this agenda item?*
  - The citizens of Camas and the broader community as a whole will benefit from improved water quality in the Lakes.
- *What are the strategies to mitigate any unintended consequences?*
  - Use of a citizen ad-hoc committee and regular updates to the City Council to keep the general public informed of the goals, strategies and efforts to improve water quality within the Lakes.
- *Does this agenda item have a differential impact on underserved populations, people living with disabilities, and/or communities of color? Please provide available data to illustrate this impact.*
  - N/A
- *Will this agenda item improve ADA accessibilities for people with disabilities?*
  - N/A
- *What potential hurdles exists in implementing this proposal (include both operational and political)?*
  - This will ultimately be a long-term effort to not only improve water quality in the Watershed, and more specifically the Lakes, but then manage it into perpetuity. There will be substantial hurdles along the way to maintain adequate resources, interest from and participation by citizens, City Council and County, State and Federal agencies.

- *How will you ensure accountabilities, communicate, and evaluate results?*
  - Use of a citizen ad-hoc committee and regular updates to the City Council to keep the general public informed of the goals, strategies and efforts to improve water quality within the Lakes.
- *How does this item support a comprehensive plan goal, policy or other adopted resolution?*
  - Adoption of a Resolution supporting the improvement of water quality of the Lakes is consistent with multiple goals in the City's 2035 Comprehensive Plan, including those identified under 3.4.1 (Environmental Stewardship), 3.4.2 (Critical Areas) and 3.4.3 (Shorelines).

**BUDGET IMPACT:** Staff has currently proposed \$75,000 per year (\$150,000 total) in the 2021/2022 DRAFT Biennium Budget. These proposed funds would likely be used to support the hiring of a consultant team that can provide the necessary resources to help staff and the ad hoc committee develop a reasonable process for moving the general discussion forward. If possible, some of these funds may be used for such things as technical research and guidance, sampling, monitoring, public outreach, etc. These funds are not anticipated to be adequate to complete an implementation or management plan. Staff anticipates additional funds will likely be needed to support this overall effort moving into the future.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends the Council discuss the Draft Resolution and provide feedback and direction for moving the Resolution forward for adoption.