



## Surface Water Management Frequently Asked Questions

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### **1.) How do I find out information about harmful algae blooms in lakes?**

Contact the Washington Department of Health at 360-236-3330 or visit their webpage at [www.doh.wa.gov/algae](http://www.doh.wa.gov/algae)

### **2.) I have a drainage ditch in front of my property and would like to fill it in. Who do I call?**

You may call the Public Works Department at (253) 835-2700. Any construction activities in the City right-of-way, such as the installation of a catch basin and pipe in a ditch, require the issuance of a permit. The City currently references an established set of criteria pertaining to ditches when evaluating permit requests which include such questions as:

- Is there evidence of significant soil erosion?
- Does the ditch present a hazard to pedestrians or vehicles?
- Is there a chronic litter or debris problem?
- Can the existing grade and invert elevations accommodate pipe and catch basins?

Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and a recommendation will be made to the Public Works permit specialists. If approved, you will be required to submit a design observing established City construction codes and pay the appropriate permit fee.

### **3.) How often does the City maintain retention/detention (R/D) ponds?**

The current service level is to mow each of the City's 204 residential R/D ponds and facilities three times each year. The first round of mowing generally occurs in late April, the second mid-summer, and the final mowing of the year takes place in mid-September.

### **4.) There are a couple of catch basin grates missing in my neighborhood. Who should I call?**

Missing catch basin grates present a significant hazard to pedestrians and vehicles. Please report any missing or broken grates immediately to the Public Works Dept at (253) 835-2700 during the regular business hours of 8 AM to 5 PM and to the City's After Hours Callout Service at 1-800-400-0749 on weeknights, weekends, and on observed holidays.



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### **5.) I have a leak in my water service. Should I call the City?**

No. The City of Federal Way is not associated with the two water districts currently providing water and sewer service within the City. Please refer to your water and sewer bill to determine your provider and contact them as appropriate. The Lake haven Utility District may be reached at (253) 941-1516 and the Tacoma Public Water Utility can be contacted at (253) 502-8000.

### **6.) If I call the City with a complaint, when should I expect a response?**

It is the practice of the SWM Maintenance Division to make every effort to respond to Citizen Action Requests (CARs) within 24 hours of receipt.

### **7.) My neighbor has redirected water onto my property. What can the City do to help?**

Please contact the Public Works Department at (253) 835-2700. While matters such as this are generally civil in nature, a representative from Surface Water Management will conduct an inspection of your property and may act in an advisory capacity to assist you with possible solutions to the problem. A Code and Compliance Officer may also be contacted to investigate any potential code violations pertaining to the flooding.

### **8.) I have a City drainage easement on my property. What does that mean?**

An easement is defined as a space or corridor on a property wherein a public or private entity or utility is granted the legal right of entry to maintain specific infrastructure such as a stream, drain pipe, power/gas line, phone cable, etc. Many different types of easements exist and for many different reasons, but be aware that the existence of a City drainage easement on your property does not imply City ownership of the property. Rather, the City will only maintain the drainage infrastructure (usually catch basins, pipes, and ditches) as specified in the easement provisions and is generally not responsible for any landscaping or mowing. As a rule, SWM staff will make every effort to notify the owner before entering the property to conduct an inspection of an easement.

### **9.) Can the City's surface water R/D facilities be used for recreation?**

Unless posted otherwise it is generally not permitted for many reasons. For example, water can present a drowning hazard, rocky areas can lead to trips and falls, litter from recreation activities can plug off pipes, and deep control manholes can result in falls not to mention potential asphyxia. Public R/D facilities are designated and designed for the sole purpose of containing and controlling surface water runoff not recreation. If you notice an unlocked gate or unsecured access point, please contact the Public Works Department at (253) 835-2700.



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### **10.) Will the City spray our neighborhood R/D pond for mosquitoes?**

No. It is the current City policy not to treat any ponds, streams, lakes, wetland areas, or other bodies of water with pesticides. For general information on the West Nile Virus and personal protection strategies, please visit the Seattle-King County Health Department's website at: <http://www.metrokc.gov/health>.

### **11.) I have a lot of water in my crawl space. Can the City do anything to help?**

Yes. Upon receipt of your request, SWM staff will contact you to schedule an inspection of your property and the surrounding area. Most water in the crawl space issues are related to a persistent ground water problem exacerbated by such things as a plugged foundation drain, cracks in the foundation, and/or surface draining downspouts. The City does not conduct any maintenance or construction activities on private property and will only act in an advisory capacity.

### **12.) Can you recommend a good drainage contractor?**

Generally speaking, no. To avoid any appearance of impropriety or favoritism, SWM staff prefers not to make any recommendation of specific contractors. A good start is to reference the headings of "drainage" or "landscaping" in your phone book. Be sure to solicit at least three to five bids and check contractor references before the acceptance of any bids.

### **13.) There are leaves covering the drain in the street. Who should I call?**

You may contact the Public Works Department during the daily business hours of 8 AM to 5 PM at (253) 835-2700 or on weeknights, weekends, and observed holidays at the Public Works After Hours Callout Service at 1-800-400-0749. Maintenance staff or a street sweeper will be dispatched to remove the leaves and debris. If you are so inclined, feel free to remove the leaves yourself-not only is it good exercise but is of great assistance, especially in the fall months, to field maintenance crews charged with the maintenance of about 12,000 catch basins.

### **14.) Does the City maintain the retention/detention (R/D) pond in my neighborhood?**

Most likely. Most open R/D facilities in residential neighborhoods are maintained by the City although exceptions do exist, particularly those located near streets designated as private or in plats where the ponds were never legally dedicated to the City of Federal Way after incorporation in February of 1990 or King County prior to that time. To obtain maintenance responsibility information on the pond in your neighborhood, please contact the SWM Maintenance Supervisor at (253) 835-2755.