

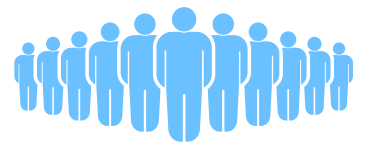
2025 ANNUAL UTILITY REPORT



Your utility bill at work

Every day, your utility bill supports the essential services that keep our community running.

2025 at a glance



100,000+
people served

2025 expenditures



Drinking Water
\$29 million



Stormwater
\$22 million



Wastewater
\$48 million



Lake Whatcom Watershed
\$15 million

Stay connected

Learn more about utility projects, planning efforts, and ways to stay connected:

- Public Works Newsletter at cob.org/pw-updates
- Engage Bellingham at engagebellingham.org
- (360) 778-7700
- askpw@cob.org



155

employees supporting
essential utility services

Total investment in
Bellingham utilities in 2025:

\$114 million

What your investment made possible in 2025

Every investment helps keep these services reliable, safe, and resilient.

Thousands of activities happen behind the scenes every year to keep Bellingham's utility systems operating safely and reliably. Most of this work happens before problems occur.

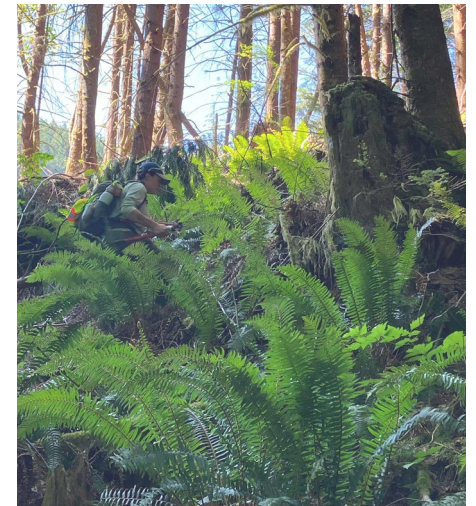
Preventative maintenance helps reduce emergency repairs, extend the life of infrastructure, and keep utility systems working when you need them most.



Stormwater

Your 2025 investment:

- ✓ Swept **4,600 miles** of streets
- ✓ Inspected or cleaned **12,216 catch basins and manholes**
- ✓ Cleaned **65 miles** of stormwater pipes
- ✓ Investigated **133 pollution incidents**
- ✓ Maintained **86 acres** of restoration and mitigation sites citywide, planting nearly **4,000 native plants**.



Drinking water

Your 2025 investment:

- ✓ Delivered **3.2 billion gallons** of drinking water
- ✓ Repaired, replaced, or maintained **817 hydrants**
- ✓ Replaced **1,802 water meters**
- ✓ Saved approximately **4.7 million gallons** of water through operational efficiencies
- ✓ Inspected **15,572 boats** to keep harmful invasive species from entering our drinking water
- ✓ Responded to **361 reports** of water leaks, most resolved within one day or less
- ✓ Completed **5,839 utility locates**
- ✓ Performed annual maintenance on **2,112 water valves** to ensure reliable water service

Wastewater

Your 2025 investment:

- ✓ Cleaned **4.3 billion gallons** of wastewater
- ✓ Removed and incinerated **3,961 tons** of solids from wastewater
- ✓ Disposed of **1,675 cubic yards** of ash
- ✓ Cleaned **184 miles** of wastewater mains
- ✓ Video inspected **17.5 miles** of wastewater mains
- ✓ Repaired **67 manholes**
- ✓ Performed **486 preventative maintenance activities** on lift stations

Lake Whatcom Watershed

Your 2025 investment:

- ✓ Purchased **1,056 acres** in a record-setting year
- ✓ Maintained **3,750 acres** of watershed property
- ✓ Installed **4,610 native plants**

Why your investment matters

Most people only notice utility systems when something goes wrong. The work highlighted here helps keep water flowing, wastewater moving, stormwater draining, and Lake Whatcom protected, so these essential services are there when you need them.

Meet the people behind your utility services

Every day, people across Public Works work behind the scenes to protect, maintain, and improve the infrastructure our community depends on.

Reliable water doesn't happen by accident

Every day, thousands of people across Bellingham turn on the tap. Most never stop to wonder whether clean reliable water will be there—and that's exactly how a reliable utility system should work.

Throughout the year, utility crews inspect and maintain water valves and hydrants, monitor hundreds of miles of underground water mains, replace aging infrastructure, and respond to leaks before they become larger problems. Much of this work happens quietly behind the scenes, helping prevent service interruptions and extending the life of the system.



"We know people rely on water being there when they turn on the tap. If it's not, that's a problem. When a main break happens, we don't stop until the water is back on."

— Tanner Patrick,
Utility Worker 5

Where clean drinking water begins

Clean drinking water begins in the forests surrounding Lake Whatcom.

Throughout the year, Natural Resources crews plant native vegetation, remove invasive species, restore habitat, maintain watershed lands, and reduce wildfire risk. It's work that most people will never see, but it plays an essential role in protecting our community's water quality before treatment even begins.



"This work improves forest resilience, reduces wildfire risk, and helps protect water quality in Lake Whatcom for future generations."

— Nelson Lee,
Natural Resources Field Supervisor



Following the evidence solves a mystery

After unusually high bacteria levels were identified at a stormwater outfall flowing into Bellingham Bay, Public Works staff launched a detailed investigation to find the source. They collected water samples, inspected underground pipes with cameras, and systematically ruled out potential causes.

The investigation eventually led crews to an aging catch basin where stagnant water had created ideal conditions for bacteria growth. After cleaning the structure, bacteria levels dropped and have remained low.

Every day, utility staff combine science, field experience, and persistence to protect public health and the waterways that connect our community.



When the storm hits

When heavy rains brought localized flooding to Bellingham in December 2025, employees from across Public Works left their regular assignments to respond wherever they were needed. Crews cleared flooded catch basins, removed fallen trees and debris, monitored road closures, and worked to restore safe travel throughout the city.

Whether it's the middle of the night, a weekend, or during severe weather, employees from across the department work side by side with one shared goal: protecting the community and restoring essential services as quickly and safely as possible.

Preparing for tomorrow

Every investment today is an investment in the generations that follow us.

Today's projects.

Tomorrow's infrastructure.

Engineering, environmental review, permitting, public engagement, funding, and design all happen before the first shovel goes in the ground. The projects below represent years of planning and investment to improve reliability today while preparing our utility systems for decades to come. More information about these projects and others can be found on our website at cob.org/projects.

Russell-Irving Watermain Replacement

\$2,448,457 invested in 2025

Replacing aging water infrastructure before it fails to continue providing reliable drinking water service for nearby homes and businesses.

Roeder Lift Station Improvements

\$5,983,816 invested in 2025

Modernizing critical wastewater infrastructure to help protect public health and ensure reliable wastewater service for our growing community.

Little Squalicum Creek

\$1,210,900 invested in 2025

Improving water quality by reducing pollution in stormwater from surrounding residential areas.

Post Point Treatment Plant Upgrades

\$1,222,683 invested in 2025

Investments at the treatment plant help maintain reliable wastewater treatment, meet evolving environmental regulations, and extend the life of critical infrastructure.

Padden Creek Fish Passage Improvements

\$4,961,692 invested in 2025

Improving fish passage while replacing aging infrastructure and strengthening the stormwater system.



Building the utility system we'll leave behind

Every generation inherits the responsibility of caring for the utility systems that serve its community.

The water, wastewater, and stormwater systems we rely on today are the result of decades of planning, investment, maintenance, and care. Today, it's our responsibility to continue that work - maintaining these systems, replacing aging infrastructure, and making thoughtful investments so they continue serving our community for decades to come.

Some of that work happens through routine maintenance and planned replacement. Other investments take years of planning, engineering, design, and construction. Together, they help ensure future generations inherit utility systems that are safe, reliable, and resilient.

Looking ahead

Public Works will continue planning, maintaining, and investing in the systems our community depends on through efforts including:

- Completing the Water System Plan
- Developing the Comprehensive Sewer Plan
- Advancing the Watermain Replacement Program
- Continuing improvements at the Post Point Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Protecting and restoring the Lake Whatcom watershed
- Replacing and upgrading aging utility infrastructure throughout the community

These efforts help ensure future investments are guided by good science, careful planning, community priorities, and responsible stewardship of public resources.

Your feedback matters!



Please share your thoughts or questions about this report:
cob.org/annual-utility-report

Need help paying your utility bill?

Reduced utility rates are available to households earning **80% or less** of the area median income.

- Learn more at cob.org/reduced-rates
- 360-778-8011
- utilitybilling@cob.org