

## 1. What is happening on Lake Serene?

Lake Serene is a natural lake. Its water level fluctuates. Lake Serene is higher than usual this winter due to a failed outlet pipe and record rainfall. Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers declared an emergency to allow Public Works to lower the level of the lake, protecting roads and other property.

## 2. How did this happen?

A pipe on private property that usually allows water to flow out of the lake apparently is blocked or collapsed. Photos from 1947 indicate that the natural lake outlet was a creek channel at that time. The county has no records of when that channel was moved and put into a pipe system. The surveyor for the 1979 development that created the four lots adjacent to the boat ramp stated that there was an existing failing culvert in the ground already. It was replaced sometime during the construction of that 1979 development. Metal pipes generally only last for 20-30 years in this environment. The private pipe has holes in it. We cannot confirm whether the existing blockage is debris (branches, etc.) or if the pipe collapsed. The failure of that pipe means that water cannot naturally flow out of the lake.

## 3. What is Snohomish County doing to help the residents whose property has flooded?

On February 13, 2017, Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers authorized emergency action to build a temporary bypass pipe at Lake Serene. The temporary pipe will prevent water from rising to a level that would flood county roads and damage infrastructure. The pipe will also provide some relief to property owners along the lake. When completed, as planned, in mid-March, it will begin reducing the lake level by about one-foot below the recent high level. The Snohomish County Council introduced legislation to fund a permanent fix. The county also provided sand and sandbags for the lake residents to assist in protecting their homes.

## 4. Why was nothing done earlier?

The failure of the private pipe occurred very recently. The county became aware of the failure in January 2017 and began emergency actions. The county has been aware of the poor condition of the private pipe for the past couple years and has been working with the community to find a solution. Because of this early work, the county was able to move quickly to design and construct the emergency overflow.

## 5. Why can't you pump like you did last time?

Instead of pumping, the county chose to install a more effective bypass pipe. While construction of a bypass pipe takes longer, it will reduce lake levels more quickly and dependably than pumping.

## 6. Who owns the existing pipeline?

The pipe is on private property. The county does not have a drainage easement over the pipe, meaning it doesn't have the authority to fix a private pipe, even if other homeowners have relied on it for drainage.

7. **How far will the emergency bypass pipe go and will the emergency fix go through private properties?**  
View project plans [here](#). The emergency overflow pipe system is being constructed along the boat launch and along Serene Way, and will connect into the existing downstream drainage system under Serene Way.
8. **What is the permanent fix that is being proposed?**  
The proposed solution is a new lake outlet system to maintain water levels within the range that lakefront property owners have experienced in the past. The project will include upgrading the existing system from the lake to Serene Way and upgrading a number of other segments to Beverly Park Road. The Snohomish County Council introduced legislation on February 13, 2017 to approve a permanent fix. There will be a hearing on March 22, 2017 on the decision. Under the proposed legislation, the county's surface water management utility, funded by all of the property owners in the watershed, would pay most of the cost. Lakefront property owners would pay an additional \$197 per property, per year for ten years since they receive additional benefit from the new lake outlet system.
9. **Why are lakeside property owners being asked to pay more than others in the watershed?**  
The county is asking the property owners along the lake to pay for about 22% of the permanent fix since they will receive a special benefit that the rest of the watershed will not receive. The majority of the project is being funded by all of the property owners in the watershed through existing surface water management utility charges.
10. **How will the cost share for this outflow pipe be decided?**  
The County Council sets Surface Water Management (SWM) utility charges. On February 13, the county executive recommended legislation to fund a permanent fix. On March 22, 2017 at 10:30 a.m., the county council will hold a public hearing and consider the legislation in the council chambers in the Administration East Building.  
  
The county has asked Lake Serene residents for their feedback on project options twice. In April 2016, Snohomish County Public Works held a community meeting to introduce and explain the options. Attendees were asked for their opinions. In early February 2017, the county sent a mail-in survey to every property owner on the lake, asking for their feedback on the options. Responses were due on Friday, February 24, 2017. They will be summarized and presented to the county council on March 22, 2017.
11. **Please explain the survey response process.**  
The county has asked for feedback from Lake Serene residents two times: once as a result of a neighborhood meeting in 2016 and in a survey that was sent to all lake residents in early February 2017. The survey was sent to 113 addresses, with a response deadline of February 24, 2017. All responses will be compiled and presented to the county council before the hearing on March 22, 2017.
12. **How do you plan to reconcile these results with the earlier results?**  
We will be using the most recent survey results because they reflect an opportunity for feedback from all lakeside property owners, not just those that were able to attend the 2016 meeting.

13. **What is the rationale for having homeowners pay a certain amount? What if a majority want the county to pay for all of it?**

The cost share allows the project to continue to a permanent fix and will provide the best long-term solution for both public infrastructure and lake properties. Property owners along Lake Serene will derive a special benefit from the outflow-system improvement that is above and beyond the cost of improvement needed to protect public infrastructure. The county determined that it would not be appropriate nor legal to spend the additional funds to provide the additional benefit for only the lake residents. The county cannot alone pay for the permanent fix.
14. **Where does the state land on this? Who controls the water?**

Other than discussions with Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife, the county has not discussed the lake levels with the state. Lake levels can be set through a judicial process. Lake Serene is a non-adjudicated lake, which means that the state has not set lake levels. The county does not control or manage the lake water level. The lake water level is currently controlled by the private pipe on the private properties. If a permanent fix is approved by property owners, the county will be responsible for maintaining the new drainage system from Lake Serene.
15. **What is the size of the pipe used in the emergency bypass system?**

The failed drainage pipe on Lake Serene is 18 inches in diameter. Snohomish County is replacing the old pipe with the same size pipe as part of the emergency bypass project to provide property owners with the same level of drainage that they had in the past. A larger pipe could put downstream property owners and public facilities at risk of increased flooding and erosion.
16. **Why does the pipe take a sharp turn onto Serene Way rather than going straight up 140th Street to Picnic Point Road?**

We are taking advantage of draining into the existing drainage system on Serene Way, rather than constructing a new half-mile drainage system along 140th Street SW. Project construction along 140th to Picnic Point would be significantly slower and more expensive than using and upgrading the existing drainage systems.
17. **What happens to the lake outflow after it leaves Serene Way? Does it go under Beverly Park Road and Lake Serene Elementary?**

That is correct.
18. **Why didn't the county set the level of the emergency overflow at the same level as the old pipe?**

The level of the emergency overflow was set to protect the road bed of Serene Way from flooding, while providing some relief for the lakeside properties. Constructing as close to the edge of the lake as we did, still created significant construction challenges. In addition, reducing the lake level further benefits only the lakeside property owners, so the cost of the additional work must be paid for by the property owners who benefit.

19. **Would lowering the emergency outlet reduce the lake level without needing additional work?**

The outlet was constructed outside the normal shoreline of the lake and above the ordinary high water mark so that it could be done with minimal permit requirements and while the lake level was high. Moderating the lake level further will require upgrading the downstream system to improve how efficiently the water flows out of the lake and extending the emergency pipe horizontally into the lake. The natural shoreline of the lake would prevent the lake from draining below the level that will be established by the emergency overflow, even if the level of the emergency overflow structure was lowered.

20. **Will the lake recede further without any additional work?**

Yes, the lake would continue to fluctuate seasonally even without additional work. It would gradually recede through the summer and then rise again in the fall and winter. As long as the private pipe outlet from the lake does not totally collapse or fall apart, it still allows a minimal amount of flow out of the lake. However, the pipe is in poor condition and could fail at any time. When the pipe fails completely and without any additional work, the high level in future years would be similar to the level today. If the permanent fix is constructed with a private cost share, the high level in future years would be slightly lower than what it was from 1981 to 2013.

If you have additional questions, please send them to [ContactSurfaceWater@snoco.org](mailto:ContactSurfaceWater@snoco.org).