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New Snohomish County Solid Waste Director has Passion for the Environment and Sustainability

Kevin Kelly's background includes work in public and private sector

EVERETT, Wash., May 5, 2021 – Snohomish County Solid Waste is a busy and complicated division of Public Works. It processes more than 550,000 tons of refuse, while serving 760,000 customers a year. The division is also responsible for decommissioning boats and RVs, overseeing the disposal of household hazardous waste and managing popular programs such as the Litter Wranglers, along with many more services. As the county grows, newly hired Snohomish County Solid Waste Director Kevin Kelly will lead the Solid Waste division with a focus on sustainability and improving the environment.

“Kevin’s diverse background makes him ideal for this position,” Snohomish County Public Works Director Kelly Snyder said. “He has a passion for the environment and is experienced in managing and improving a large organization. Kevin has the perspective to also understand all the impacts that this division can have on residents’ lives and the economy.”

Kelly comes to Snohomish County Solid Waste after spending nearly a decade at Recology King County, where he was the general manager overseeing a large collection fleet as well as a recycling center that processes more than 80,000 tons of recyclable material each year. Among other accomplishments, Kelly introduced Recology’s first Class 8 all electric collection vehicle.

“It’s easy to take your surroundings for granted in the Pacific Northwest,” said Kelly, who lives a mile from where he grew up in Issaquah. “We live in an amazing and beautiful place. To have a hand in helping to preserve this incredible natural environment is important to me and solid waste sustainability programs play a big part in this.”

Kelly wants to work with stakeholders to see how Snohomish County can produce, discard and recycle materials in a way that make the most sense for the environment and the economy. One of his many focuses will be helping to educate residents and businesses so they know what they can and cannot recycle.

His career has not always been about garbage and recycling, as he started out in government public affairs. Kelly was approached about working for Recology King County while he was a public affairs manager at the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce.

“I was like ‘Garbage? I don’t think so,’” Kelly said. “But I quickly discovered it is a fascinating world. It touches on so many things like policy, economy, land use, transportation, and energy use. The logistics side is fascinating, too. The people who work in this industry are among the best I’ve worked with during my career.”

Solid waste logistics have become more complicated with the health crisis. There has been a big shift from office collection to residential with so many professionals working from home. More individuals are making use of transfer stations.

With all the changes in the past year, the most important thing to Kelly is always safety – whether it’s being around heavy equipment or just wearing a mask and social distancing. He said that everybody needs to “pack their patience and be respectful of everyone’s safety” while at county facilities.

About Snohomish County Public Works

Snohomish County Public Works is responsible for approximately 1,600 miles of county roads, more than 200 bridges and manages about 200 traffic control signals. The department also processes nearly 600,000 tons of garbage per year. Its mission is to focus on safety and mobility while practicing fiscal responsibility and preserving the environment. Public Works has won numerous state and national honors for its work and is the largest department within Snohomish County government with approximately 500 employees plus seasonal staff. Its main office is located at 3000 Rockefeller Ave., Everett, WA 98201.

Visit www.snohomishcountywa.gov/PublicWorks for more information about Snohomish County Public Works.

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