



Gregory L. Geist  
*Director*

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of County Commissioners as WES Governing Body  
Gary Schmidt, District Administrator

FROM: Greg Geist, District Director

DATE: 19 March 2020

SUBJECT: WES Services & Late Fee Waiver

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During this time of uncertainty, Clackamas Water Environment Services' (WES') customers deserve to know two things. The first is that WES' staff will continue to protect public health by ensuring the continued operation of the wastewater treatment system, which includes virus removal and pathogen treatment efforts to ensure that our waterways will remain viable suppliers of drinking water and ensure a healthy watershed for the natural systems that depend on it. WES' staff are experienced and comfortable working in these conditions as part of their everyday work, and the organization has adopted several procures to improve resiliency and ensure that this essential public service will continue without interruption. This includes splitting our operational staff into two distinct work shifts, taking on 11 & 12 hour days, to ensure that an infection or quarantine order will at most only touch 50% of our everyday workforce. Staff are also being dispersed from the DSB to work remotely as best able given business needs, while maintaining the functionality to support critical continuing operations.

The second is that WES is here to support its' customers through any hardship that may arise from this unprecedented situation. WES already has a low-income discount program that is available for anyone with a household income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level, and customers can seek that program at any time including over the phone or electronically. WES staff continue to work to respond to customer concerns and respond to customer inquiries.

But given the economic uncertainty and potential challenges the necessary health restrictions could impose, we would like to go a step further. Consistent with the Board of County Commissioners' declaration of emergency and direction to provide support for the public, WES requests permission from the BCC as its' governing body to not charge late fees for unpaid wastewater or surface water fees due for the duration of the crisis, and to work with customers to find a repayment plan that matches their circumstances to the extent there is nonpayment, up to and including a lengthy delay before a repayment schedule begins with a no-interest, no late fee path to bringing the account current over the appropriate period of time given that customer's circumstances. This would include non-certification of customer accounts for collection via property taxes (as is customarily done) for account that show nonpayment beginning in March 2020 or later. Staff requests the delegated authority to broadly implement this program consistent with the intent and goals outlined above.

It is unclear what the financial impact of this would be, but WES leadership feels confident that the organization has sufficient financial resources to offer this assurance and benefit to our customers without impairing our ability to continue providing wastewater and surface water services or impairing the progress of any current or future capital projects. We respectfully request the BCC's permission to implement this program and communicate it to our customers in coordination with PGA.