

## Oak Harbor Clean Water Facility

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### **Oak Harbor construction team continues wastewater facility excavation with successful local Tribe consultation**



In collaboration and consultation with local American-Indian Tribes, State and Federal agencies, the City of Oak Harbor continues demolition of existing treatment facilities in Windjammer Park, excavation and soil stabilization for the new Clean Water Facility.

On Thursday, January 14, recovery of isolated human remains required focused excavation. This work implemented protocols from a Memorandum of Agreement signed by six Tribes, the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the City of Oak Harbor, established prior to project construction. Successful recovery took place with monitoring by the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Lummi Nation, Samish Indian Nation, Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, The Suquamish Tribe, Tulalip Tribes and Upper Skagit Indian Tribe. Representatives of the EPA, DOE, and City of Oak Harbor were also present.

*"The City of Oak Harbor recognizes our unique history on Whidbey Island and the need to protect the cultural resources of the community," reflected Mayor Bob Sevrens. "Recorded history dates back far before a formal city existed here, when American-Indian ancestors inhabited the same areas we use today for home and play. This rich history and ancestry must be formally recognized on a project like the Clean Water Facility. Excellent cooperation between the tribal representatives, regulatory agencies, and the city's project team successfully resolved a sensitive situation. The City looks forward to further consultation as the project moves forward."*

Over these past 26 weeks of active investigative and excavation work, evidence of pre-contact activities has been found. The team employs an on-site archeologist for timely assessment in the event of findings. The City, the on-site archaeologists, and tribes have been working cooperatively to properly mitigate discoveries as they occur.

The Clean Water Facility is a major construction project with federal funding; federal and state laws govern the process for applying for and receiving permits based on proximity to potential findings of historic or cultural significance in the project area. Respect for any potential artifacts and confidentiality about them is recognized as part of those laws, one example of which is Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (Section 106). All archeological activities are kept confidential out of respect for local American-Indian Tribes, and in accordance with Washington State law, as formally outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement

(MOA). The Washington State Department of Archeological and Historic Preservation (DAHP) is also party to the MOA.

The project team expects deep facility excavation to continue through Spring 2016.

*For more information about the Oak Harbor Clean Water Facility, please visit [www.oakharborcleanwater.org](http://www.oakharborcleanwater.org).*

*The City of Oak Harbor must modernize its existing wastewater system to improve aging infrastructure, serve its community, and better protect Puget Sound – specifically the waters of Oak and Crescent Harbors. The City has been actively working to site and design a facility since 2010. The current wastewater treatment system, which consists of two facilities, is aging, difficult to maintain, nearing capacity, and not equipped to meet future water quality standards. In 2014, the City selected the Windjammer Vicinity as the site for the future wastewater treatment plant. The new facility is expected to be operational in 2018.*

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