



Independent Evaluation and Audit (Peer Review) of 48” Patuxent Raw Water Main Project Audit Findings and Recommendations Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Wednesday February 11, 2026

Meeting Time: 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM

Meeting Location: Hybrid (Online: Teams, In-person: WSSC Water Support Center Auditorium, 14501 Sweitzer Lane, Laurel, Maryland 20707)

Presenters

- *WSP USA*
 - Sonia Wu (Project Manager, Lead Engineering reviewer)
 - Nazir Rassikh (Lead Construction Execution reviewer/ audit)
 - Tabia Gamble (Lead Outreach Specialist)
 - Minahil Mehdi (Outreach Specialist)
- *WSSC Water*
 - Rufus Leeth (Acting division manager, Pipeline Design Division)
 - Nadir Al-Salam (Division Manager, Pipeline Construction Division)
 - Alan Sauvageau (Division Manager, Asset Management Division)
 - Joy Hamilton (Project Outreach Manager)
 - Michael Jackson (Division Manager, Procurement Services)

Total Number of Public Attendees:

- In-person Public Attendees: 5
- Virtual Public Attendees: 6

Presentation

- **Independent Evaluation of Patuxent Water Pipeline Project:** WSP Team presented the findings of their Independent Evaluation and Audit (Peer Review) of the 48” Patuxent Raw Water Main Project for WSSC Water, covering project scope,



methodology, planning, design, construction, cost analysis, community engagement, and recommendations for process improvement.

- **Project Scope and Methodology:** The evaluation covered the Patuxent 48-inch pipeline project, focusing on planning, design, construction, inspections, and community engagement. The methodology included document reviews, compliance checks, cost analysis, and stakeholder feedback to ensure an objective and evidence-based review.
- **Planning and Design Phase Findings:** The planning phase began in 2004, with construction starting in 2020. Delays were attributed to budget constraints, easement acquisitions, and permitting issues. Early community engagement was strong but weakened over time due to long delays, leading to a disconnect between commitments and execution. Outdated baseline conditions and insufficient geotechnical investigations contributed to unforeseen construction difficulties.
- **Design and Construction Challenges:** Key challenges included underground utility conflicts from outdated or missing data, leading to major rework and change orders, and subsurface issues such as shallow and hard rocks and unstable soils. Gaps in geotechnical investigations and missing reports in the bid package exacerbated these issues. The use of specific pipe lay-schedule and procurement methods during supply chain disruptions due to COVID complicated material handling and limited flexibility.
- **Procurement and Contracting Issues:** Critical documents, such as geotechnical studies, were not included in bid packages, and supply chain disruptions led to material delivery and storage challenges, causing productivity losses. It is recommended to include all critical reports in bid documents and proactive planning for supply chain disruptions.
- **Construction Execution Review:** The review identified nonconformities in project quality control, irregular compaction and testing, gaps in inspections, and insufficient data on existing underground utilities. The project experienced a 641-day delay, with major contributors including reduced productivity due to rock and wet soils, material rehandling issues, and delayed delivery of fittings.



- **Cost and Schedule Analysis:** The original construction contract value was \$8,393,777.00, which increased to \$ 9,487,057.05 after seven approved change orders, excluding a pending change order cost for shallow rock impacts. The project was delayed by 641 days, with the completion date moving from March 2023 to December 2024.
- **Design and Construction Recommendations for Future Projects:** Recommendations included developing quality control and assurance plans, adopting agile change management, assigning project controls specialists, improving response times to RFIs and change orders, and enhancing risk management and communication within WSSC Water.
- **Internal and External Coordination and Process Improvements:** WSP identified internal gaps such as personnel turnover and handoff issues, and external challenges including multi-agency permitting and utility coordination, recommending cross-functional teams, better handoffs, and formal interagency plans. Recommendations including clear communication on corrective actions and ensuring public-facing teams have accurate, timely information was emphasized, along with early engagement and alignment with county, state, and federal cycles.
- **Community Engagement and Stakeholder Feedback:** WSP Team conducted interviews with stakeholders including elected officials, community members and project team members. A public comment form was circulated digitally and via door-to-door distribution, inviting 17 responses. Findings indicated inconsistent, reactive communication and delays between planning and design phases.
- **Community Engagement Review:** Site visit and a review of community engagement presentations, flyers, emails and assessment of daily inspection reports was conducted. The evaluation detailed WSSC's communication and outreach process, highlighted inconsistencies, gaps and provided recommendations for proactive and inclusive engagement.
- **Oversight and Contractor Performance:** Limited oversight of contractor performance led to issues such as poor temporary patching, trash and debris on site, and inadequate day-to-day management of site clean-up, resulting in community complaints.



- **Agency Coordination:** There was a lack of early coordination with partner agencies, which improved later in the project. Early collaboration was recommended to minimize community disruption and maximize benefits such as improved sidewalks and crosswalks.
- **Community Engagement Recommendations:** WSP recommended enhancing proactive and inclusive community engagement practices consistently throughout the course of WSSC projects, especially as changes occur to the project timeline, execution and completion. The evaluation indicated towards holding community engagement training for WSSC Water staff and contractors, establishing regular communication protocols with elected officials, increasing engagement frequency, broadening outreach to schools and community centers, increased engagement to local and state agencies, and implementing project task forces for major projects.
- **Lesson learned and Key Recommendations:** WSP summarized the lesson learned from pre-construction and construction phases and recommended four key initiatives for WSSC Water future projects to consider: Proactive Risk Management, Integrated Change Management, Improved Process Management and QA/QC Process, and Strengthening Communication, Collaboration & Engagement.
- **Public Q&A:** Two Community members raised questions or provided comments during the meeting about interview scope, contractor issues, project costs, and communication with WSP and WSSC Water staff, providing detailed responses and referencing available written answers. Community questions or comments are included below with responses from the WSP Team. ***[For the purpose of the meeting summary, the comments provided by the members (s) of the public and responses were synthesized for clarity and understanding, a full recording is available on the website.]***
 1. **Question/Comment:** Why was the former WSSC Water Director of Engineering not interviewed?
 - **Response:** Interviews were conducted exclusively with current employees of WSSC Water, consulting firms, and the contractor. This approach was based on practical considerations, including accessibility, availability, privacy obligations, and the need to



minimize potential bias. Where interview participation of former employees was not feasible during the audit timeline, WSP relied on official records and cross-verification with other stakeholders to avoid gaps. This is consistent with our published methodology for audits of projects.

2. **Question/Comment:** Why were drivers who traverse Bond Mill Road not interviewed including: USPS, Federal Express, UPS, and school bus drivers.
 - **Response:** As part of this audit, members of the public were invited to provide feedback through interviews with the project team or by completing a comment form. The responses received adequately reflected public perspectives relevant to the audit. While broad engagement is important, it is not practical to involve every individual or organization that traveled on Bond Mill Road, nor would such an approach meaningfully contribute to developing actionable recommendations for future capital projects. Our approach ensured balanced, verifiable information that supported the audit's findings.
3. **Question/Comment:** Why was the principal of Bond Mill Elementary School or the crossing guard not interviewed who could report on the daily impact of the project?
 - **Response:** WSP distributed the comment form to Bond Mill Elementary School and received responses that reflected the same concerns previously raised by the community, both before the audit and during the evaluation. The engagement conducted with Bond Mill Elementary School sufficiently met the audit's objectives; therefore, no additional interviews were required. As part of this peer review, members of the public were invited to provide feedback through interviews with the project team or by completing a comment form. The comment form was distributed to Bond Mill Elementary School, resulting in several responses that reflected the community's experience with the project, which adequately reflected input from the school community. Conducting individual interviews with specific staff could have provided additional detail, but WSP considers the collected information via Form provided information to meet the audit's objectives, hence additional interviews were not necessary.



4. **Question/Comment:** The question was never answered or pressed by WSP as to why WSSC Water allowed the contractor to abandon the project and the reasons why. The report articulated that the contractor had to abandon the Bond Mill Road project for a “higher” priority but did not say what that higher priority was.
 - **Response:** The audit report appendix – A.3 Interview with WSSC Water Project Team documented the interview minutes. The interview minutes included the discussion between WSP and WSSC Water related to the Contractor’s temporary demobilization and communication to the community. WSP found no formal, documented indication of the “higher priority” in the records reviewed, or a written approval from WSSC Water authorizing temporary demobilization and documented this accordingly.
5. **Question/Comment:** Why couldn’t the project be completed without the in-kind assistance from WSSC, which I understand added roughly another \$10 million in pipes and other materials? And why wasn’t that portion of the budget reviewed?
 - **Response:** The project was designed to be an owner furnished material project so that was the basis of our evaluation. For our cost review we chose the Engineer's estimate and construction contract awarded cost as our baseline value of the project construction cost, which did not include other materials and efforts and excluded pipe procurement by WSSC Water. We reviewed project's cost changes in comparison with Engineer's estimated value and project budget at award, then evaluated all related/ approved Change Orders.
6. **Question/Comment:** Community outreach should be conducted by WSSC employees rather than contractors, citing negative experiences with contractor-led meetings and communication.
 - **Response:** WSSC Water appreciated the recommendation and acknowledged receipt.
- **WSSC Water Implementation of Recommendations:** WSSC Water staff presented ongoing and planned actions to address WSP's recommendations, covering asset



management, pipeline design, construction, community engagement, and procurement.

- **Asset Management and Project Controls:** A new CIP Project and Programs Control section was established to set schedules, cost baselines, and provide predictive analytics. Staff hiring and a gap analysis are underway, with risk registers and dashboards planned for fiscal years 27-28.
- **Pipeline Design and Agency Coordination:** Pipeline design improvements include updating the design manual, holding consultants accountable, and enhancing coordination with external agencies and critical customers. Area project coordination teams and cross-project planning efforts are ongoing.
- **Construction Management Enhancements:** The pipeline construction division is updating processes for RFIs, submittals, daily inspection reports, and quality assurance. A new customer service management system will be implemented in April 2026, and standard specifications will require quality control plans.
- **Community Engagement Initiatives:** A new department, Strategic Partnerships and Community Impact, was created to ensure consistent outreach. Quarterly project updates are mailed, engagement begins at the 30% design milestone, and outreach is broadened to various community organizations. Project task forces and regular communication with elected officials are now standard practice.
- **Procurement and Supply Chain Improvements:** Procurement Services revised policies to address supply chain disruptions, expanded the vendor base, and adopted new methodologies for contract awards, with ongoing efforts to enhance procurement practices.
- **Public Q&A:** One member of the public provided comments during the meeting to which WSSC is providing a complete response here. ***[For the purpose of the meeting summary, the comments provided by the members (s) of the public and responses were synthesized for clarity and understanding, a full recording is available on the website.]***
 - **Question/Comment:** What I heard in this presentation raised major concerns for me. Much of what was described as “recommendations” is



simply standard professional project-management practice—process management, change management, risk management, and the rest. These should already be in place. I asked how many WSSC staff are actually certified in project management because, frankly, it seems clear that more people need to be.

The recommendations presented tonight looked like a restatement of the audit report, but with no detailed implementation plans or cost estimates behind them. For the community to have confidence, WSSC needs to show the actual dollars, staffing, and resources required to carry out each of these changes. It's easy to put boxes on a slide. The real question is: can WSSC truly execute these professional project-management processes? And will you budget for them? Because these are not free—they require real investment.

I'm also very skeptical of the timelines shown. I don't see how WSSC can realistically complete a full change-management program and all related risk-management processes by the end of the year. That simply doesn't align with the magnitude of what needs to be fixed.

Beyond the presentation, my concerns come from what I've continued to see on Bond Mill Road. During the water-main break in December, it became obvious that many of the underlying issues have not changed. The crew was told to dig down six feet, yet WSSC's own documentation shows the water main is fourteen feet deep. It took two days just to reach it. That tells me WSSC still doesn't have accurate data on pipe locations, and I did not hear anything tonight about improving geotechnical or subsurface-location processes.

Even worse, what was uncovered shows a non-potable (sewer) line installed above a potable water line. That is not good design. It creates real risk. I know WSSC may say it is acceptable, but from a community perspective, it isn't. This isn't the first time this type of decision has been made—I remember similar issues near Orem involving rock and pipe placement. Choosing to place potable water under non-potable water to avoid rock excavation might save money, but it increases risk, and that is unacceptable.



I want WSSC to show the community, with transparency, every location where potable lines are beneath non-potable ones. Right now, I don't believe WSSC fully knows where all these lines are, and that's a serious problem.

Communication failures during the December break only reinforce this. Water service was shut off for 35 residents with no notice. I had to call the emergency line myself, and the message referenced an issue in Montgomery County—not West Laurel. After the extensive work WSSC did in our neighborhood last year, this kind of oversight should not be happening. Because residents weren't notified, I ended up going door-to-door delivering water to neighbors and to the continuing-care facility across the street.

This is why I have said publicly that the Chair should resign. From my perspective, nothing has changed. And unless WSSC is willing to fully acknowledge these risks, provide transparent pipe-location information, and genuinely fix the underlying management issues, the community will continue to be at risk.

The community deserves to know exactly where potable and non-potable pipelines cross and failing to provide that information is a disservice to all of us.