



## **Mission**

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The mission of the Water Quality Program is to protect and restore Washington's waters.

## **Purpose of the strategic plan**

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The strategic plan helps focus program energy, ensures that staff are working toward the same long-term goals, and allows the program to adjust strategies in response to a changing environment. It is not meant to duplicate implementation details found in biennial plans.

## **Vision**

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By 2020:

- Our waters meet federal and state water quality standards that protect human health and the environment.
- Communities are implementing best management practices that are known to protect and clean up water pollution.
- We accomplish high priority public health and environment improvements through responsible investments of public funds.
- The program is well-positioned for accomplishing its mission through a dedicated workforce and stable funding.

## **Water Quality Program strategic priorities**

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### **Nonpoint source water pollution**

Nonpoint pollution is Washington's most serious pollution problem and the most difficult one to solve. This is because it comes from diffuse sources, is generated by every kind of land use, and has no specific regulatory tool—such as a permit—designed to deal with it. Solving the nonpoint pollution problem will require behavior changes as well as better land management and structural management practices. Ecology will:

- Develop a manual of best management practices that are known to keep water clean.
- Secure federal funding to support nonpoint activities.
- Make sure forest practices are on a path to meet water quality standards.



## **Clean up polluted waters**

Ecology will help local communities and businesses clean up polluted waters to meet water quality standards. Ecology will:

- Assess state waters and update the list of polluted water bodies.
- Make implementing water cleanup work a higher priority than new studies for nonpoint water cleanup plans.
- Work with communities to implement nonpoint actions.
- Use a “straight-to-implementation” approach when we know what nonpoint actions need to be taken to protect water quality.

## **Point source water pollution**

The agency regulates discharges of pollutants to surface and ground waters by writing and managing wastewater discharge permits for sewage treatment plants, industrial facilities, and other general categories of wastewater dischargers. Ecology will:

- Make inspections and permit compliance higher priorities than renewing existing permits.
- Make permits understandable and effective in protecting water quality.
- Ensure industries and communities that discharge wastewater comply with water quality laws through the combined efforts of technical assistance and vigilant regulatory oversight.
- Work to increase the use of reclaimed water.
- Decrease pollutant loading from wastewater discharges.
- Determine if and where human-related sources of nitrogen need to be reduced in order to protect dissolved oxygen levels in South Puget Sound.

## **Stormwater**

Ecology assists local governments in building stormwater programs in cities and counties. Our stormwater permits cover municipalities, industries, and construction projects. Ecology will:

- Focus on activities that improve permittee accountability and compliance with existing stormwater permits.
- Work to ensure that having a permit is not a competitive disadvantage.
- Provide technical assistance and tools to help dischargers reduce contaminated stormwater runoff from their sites.
- Provide financial assistance to local governments to help them comply with permit requirements.



## **Financial assistance**

Ecology distributes more than 200 million dollars in water quality grants and loans each biennium to protect public health and the environment. Ecology will:

- Provide financial assistance quickly to water quality projects with the highest benefit to human health and the environment.
- Capture environmental data and demonstrate the environmental benefits of the grant and loan program.
- Assist grant and loan recipients in properly managing public funds.
- Effectively manage the \$65.4 million received by the state from the Federal American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009 (for water pollution control projects) to the highest priority projects that are ready to proceed to construction.