

Stormwater Work Group Reporter

September 2011

Key news and information you need to stay current on the effort to create a regional stormwater monitoring and assessment strategy for Puget Sound

Ecology to release formal draft permit language next month

Ecology plans to release formal draft municipal stormwater NPDES permits for a public comment period from about Oct. 19, 2011 through Jan. 19, 2012. The permits are expected to include language for monitoring requirements. Ecology's preliminary draft monitoring language (released for a public comment period in May-June 2011) was largely based on the Stormwater Work Group's (SWG) [Recommendations for Municipal Stormwater Permit Monitoring](#) submitted in October 2010. Following are some of the key SWG recommendations:

- Pooling resources is essential to minimize the cost and maximize the benefits of monitoring. This is especially true for smaller permitted jurisdictions with limited resources and monitoring experience.
- Pooled funds will pay to monitor, share information, and study program effectiveness.
- The SWG considered many options for establishing an entity to administer the pooled funding approach for the next permit and agreed that Ecology is the only viable option to serve this role at this time.
- The SWG should provide project management oversight of the pooled funding approach.

The SWG encourages all interested parties to submit comments to Ecology on the draft permit language. Ecology is expected to issue the final permits in July 2012.

More information (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/2012Reissuance.html>)

Stormwater monitoring proposals discussed throughout Washington State

The SWG-recommended approach to pooling resources to conduct a collaborative regional stormwater monitoring program was discussed at meetings around the state this past summer. Local governments and others provided informal comments to the Washington State Department of Ecology on proposals to (1) implement the SWG's recommendations in Puget Sound, (2) expand some components of the SWG's recommendations to Southwest Washington, and (3) replicate the recommended Puget Sound approach in Eastern Washington.

Comments on Ecology's proposal for Puget Sound included, briefly:

- Widespread support for a regional approach to monitoring.
- Concern about the overall program costs, particularly for the status and trends monitoring.
- Concern that permittees might not have sufficient funds to continue existing local monitoring programs.
- Smaller jurisdictions' preference for a population-based cost allocation approach and requests that larger jurisdictions not be allowed to "opt out" of the regional effectiveness studies.
- Larger jurisdictions' preference for a base-level cost contribution and requests for flexibility to do their own effectiveness studies to address local needs.

Many comments on Ecology's other proposals requested that the state conduct and support processes similar to the SWG process but specific to those regions.

More information (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/2012Reissuance.html>)

Local governments unable to form consensus on cost allocations

Despite widespread support for a regional approach to monitoring, the formula for determining the cost share for each jurisdiction to implement the program has been the subject of debate throughout the SWG's deliberations. This has been a challenging issue because the benefits of each approach to allocating costs would vary across jurisdictions. Because local governments were unable to recommend a preferred approach, Ecology will have to make a decision as to how to allocate costs among permittees. These pooled funds will pay to monitor, share information, and study program effectiveness.

More information (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/2012Reissuance.html>)

Stormwater Work Group recommends topics for regional effectiveness studies

The SWG has completed the task of compiling, categorizing, evaluating, and ranking more than 170 effectiveness study ideas that were proposed by local governments and others earlier this year. Last week, the SWG took the next step of recommending a list of prioritized study topics and questions to Ecology. We expect the list of topics to be included in the October formal draft municipal NPDES stormwater permits. In early 2012, following the public comment period on the formal draft permits, a request for proposals will be issued to develop specific study designs for the final list of topics.

More information (<https://sites.google.com/site/pugetsoundstormwaterworkgroup/home/selection-of-effectiveness-studies>)

Stormwater Work Group refines recommendations for status and trends monitoring

Technical experts have continued working with the SWG to clarify and improve the recommendations for status and trends monitoring in small streams and the marine nearshore environment. Study designs have been updated to reflect better understanding of existing programs and information. Cost estimates, in turn, have been updated to reflect the revised study designs and contributions of federal and state money to conduct initial program activities.

More information (<https://sites.google.com/site/pugetsoundstormwaterworkgroup/home/status-and-trends-oversight>)

About the Stormwater Work Group

The Stormwater Work Group is a coalition of federal, tribal, state and local government, business, environmental, agriculture and research interests working to develop a Stormwater Monitoring and Assessment Strategy for Puget Sound at the request of the Puget Sound Partnership and Department of Ecology. The strategy is intended to provide a coordinated, integrated approach to quantifying the stormwater problem in Puget Sound and to help us efficiently and effectively manage stormwater to reduce harm to the ecosystem.

More information (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/psmonitoring/swworkgroup.html>)