

**COUNTY OF WALLA WALLA**  
**STATE OF WASHINGTON**  
**OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER COURT**

June 15, 2011

Municipal Stormwater Permit Comments  
WA Department of Ecology  
Water Quality Program  
P.O. Box 47696  
Olympia, WA 98504-7696

Dear Department of Ecology;

Walla Walla County appreciates this opportunity to comment on the Low Impact Development and Monitoring Preliminary Draft Permit Language issued May 16, 2011. We strongly object to Ecology's proposed stormwater monitoring language. We mailed our first stormwater utility bills at the end of April and have since had the opportunity to talk with hundreds of concerned county residents. As such, we feel we have very timely input regarding the proposed monitoring requirements, as well as the mechanism by which Ecology proposes to implement those requirements.

Over the last six weeks, a few common concerns emerged that have direct bearing on the draft permit language. In general, Walla Walla County citizens object to funding projects that do not have an immediate bearing on their local environment. They object to paying fees that will not provide immediate, tangible, quantifiable benefits to local citizens. The idea of Ecology requiring Walla Walla County to pay a pre-determined fee to support some undetermined monitoring somewhere in eastern Washington, to, as your website states, "*evaluate whether stormwater management actions, in aggregate, are resulting in statistically significant improvements to surface water quality*" is directly contrary to our goal of fiscally-responsible, transparent local government. Ecology's proposed monitoring program will require significant financial outlays from Walla Walla County without any guarantee that we will have any better idea of what is actually in our stormwater, or how much of that stormwater actually reaches and impacts a water body.

**Expansion of requirements.** Under previously published guidance, Walla Walla County was only to be responsible for Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) Effectiveness Monitoring/Targeted SWMP Effectiveness Monitoring (S8.C.1.b). Ecology Publication no. 10-10-030 "Monitoring and Reporting Guidance Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permits", published May 2010, includes thresholds for monitoring that exclude counties with fewer than 50,000 people in the unincorporated county from Stormwater Monitoring (S8.C.1) and Runoff Treatment BMP Effectiveness Monitoring (S8.C.1.c). As such, Walla Walla County's Monitoring Plan did not include these elements, nor did we include them in our long-term budgets.

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Walla Walla County has asked for guidance and clarification on monitoring requirements multiple times, and at no point was led to believe that monitoring requirements during the second 5-year permit cycle would be substantially different than what was detailed in the first 5-year permit cycle and subsequent guidance document. In fact, we were instructed not to make a big deal out of the monitoring requirements, as they would likely be reduced in scope.

**Requirement to participate in a stakeholder process.** The draft permit language requires that Walla Walla County enter into an as-yet-undefined stakeholder consensus agreement to develop a regional monitoring plan and to conduct monitoring. We strongly object to being required to enter into an unknown commitment. Further, the Explanatory Notes included with the draft monitoring language state that *"It is reasonable to expect that the group will need at least 8-12 meetings to propose recommendations to Ecology"*. This is an unreasonable level of involvement for small jurisdictions, but if Walla Walla County is not at the table we will not have a voice in deciding how payments should be assessed, what studies will be conducted, and what geographic areas will be studied. By taking this stakeholder approach, and requiring Walla Walla County to participate in monitoring activities beyond the originally communicated scope, Ecology is essentially requiring that Walla Walla County spend at least 200 additional staff hours just to define a monitoring program.

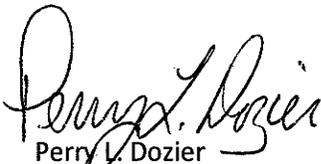
**No consideration of monitoring conducted for TMDL requirements.** The draft permit language does not consider existing monitoring that may be done in support of other programs, such as monitoring done under a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). If a jurisdiction already supports monitoring of stormwater or surface water, we ask that the permit language be modified such that a) data collected in support of other programs be included in the stormwater ambient or effectiveness evaluation and b) the annual dollar amount a jurisdiction is expected to spend to conduct stormwater monitoring be reduced to take this other monitoring into account.

Walla Walla County will also submit detailed comments about the draft Low Impact Development and Monitoring Preliminary Draft Permit language through Ecology's comment form.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

WALLA WALLA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

  
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Chair

  
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