

## Potential Changes or Activities

### What are the Water Quality Standards?

Washington's surface water quality standards (Chapter 173-201A WAC) set limits on pollution in our lakes, rivers, and marine waters to protect beneficial uses such as swimming and fishing. They are the basis for assessing the quality of the state's waters. The standards set numeric limits for discharges to surface waters. Periodically, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) reviews the standards and, if needed, revises them to reflect current knowledge or new scientific information.

### What changes or activities will take place?

Starting now and during the next two years, Ecology plans to:

- Conduct a limited rule revision to update typographic errors and make clarifications.
- Re-evaluate the criteria for dissolved oxygen in freshwater.
- Update waterbody "uses" based on current salmonid presence and spawning data.
- Start the next Triennial Review. The Clean Water Act requires periodic review of the surface water quality standards to improve their implementation. The review includes extensive public involvement and may result in guidance, training, or rule revisions.

### Limited rule revision for 'typos'

The current rule contains a number of typographical errors and areas that need clarifications. These errors are due to the size and scope of the rulemaking in 2006. Proposed revisions include:

- Missing references to a section of the rule.
- Imprecise or erroneous latitude/longitude values in Table 602.
- Mistake in equation for ammonia criterion (error when rule was published).

These changes are strictly to correct errors and do not change the intent or application of the rule. Therefore, they qualify for an

### MORE INFORMATION

#### About the Water Quality Standards:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs/index.html>

#### Rule revision activities:

[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs/rule\\_rev-timeline.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs/rule_rev-timeline.html)

Timelines for rule change activities and public meeting announcements will be posted on this website.

#### Triennial review process:

[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs/triennial\\_review.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs/triennial_review.html)

#### How can I participate?

Attend a public meeting or provide comments to the contact below.

Host a workshop and invite an Ecology staff person to give a presentation.

Sign up for the Water Quality Standards listserv for updates on standards-related actions.

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/swqs/listserv.html>

#### Contact information:

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#### Special accommodations:

If you need this publication in an alternate format, call the Water Quality Program at 360-407-6404. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

expedited rule process (RCW 34.05.353(1)(c)]. Ecology's anticipated time frame for this work is October 2008 through May 2009.

### **Dissolved oxygen**

During the federal review of Washington's 2006 rule revision, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) expressed significant concern over the state's dissolved oxygen (DO) criteria. Their specific concern relates to the levels of DO in gravel beds, where salmonids spawn and fry develop. Ecology made a commitment to study some options for addressing dissolved oxygen criteria, including intergravel DO, and will propose changes based on that study. Ecology has assigned a primary researcher to the study, who will work with an external focus group to formulate a recommendation.

Ecology's anticipated schedule:

- Complete draft study report in summer 2009.
- Share the report findings with the public after the study is completed.
- If the report conclusions recommend changes to the freshwater DO criteria, Ecology will initiate that action.

### **Update "uses" of water bodies for salmonid presence and spawning**

Ecology is working with the tribes, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, NMFS, and USFWS to keep information current on salmonid presence in streams and where spawning and early rearing occur. Annually, starting in fall 2008, Ecology will request an updated dataset from the agencies and tribes. Ecology will use this new data to propose changes to the aquatic life uses for streams and rivers in the state.

### **Triennial review process**

Federal regulations require that states hold public meetings at least once every three years to review applicable surface water quality standards and, as appropriate, adopt new or modified standards. These periodic reviews have several purposes. They are a forum to discuss all issues of interest regarding the water quality standards and their implementation, including:

1. New initiatives being developed by EPA.
2. Guidance needed to improve the implementation of the current standards.
3. Recommended new or revised criteria.
4. Progress with ongoing standards-related efforts.
5. The long-term strategy and timeline for future activities of the surface water quality standards.

In the fall of 2009, Ecology will announce dates and locations for the public meetings. After the meetings, Ecology will summarize and prioritize water quality standard activities (guidance development, education, rule changes, etc.) and announce upcoming actions.