

### Watermasters in the Columbia River Basin

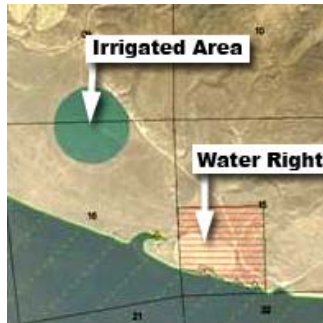
The Columbia River Basin Water Management Program (Program) was created by the Legislature in 2006. Its mission is to aggressively pursue development of water supplies to benefit both instream and out-of-stream water uses. One of the things the Program must do to fulfill this mission is ensure that water is distributed and used fairly and legally. To accomplish this, Ecology hired a watermaster.

### Watermaster Duties

A watermaster is an Ecology employee assigned to enforce laws, rules and permit conditions within a specific geographic area of the state, usually one or more watersheds. Watermasters may also provide technical assistance, work on permitting and assist in watershed planning. The watermaster's job is to make sure that water uses are consistent with state laws. Most of their time is spent helping water users comply with existing laws. Formal enforcement is a very small part of their work.

### Investigating Possible Unauthorized Water Use

Using photographic and water right mapping data, Ecology has identified a number of irrigated areas along the Columbia River that are inconsistent with mapped water rights. There are a number of possible explanations for these differences, including, but not limited to:



- Inaccurate data.
- A water right transfer application is currently being processed.
- Water is being used in a way that is not consistent with the provisions of the water right.
- Water has not been allocated by the granting of a water right.

### Why the watermaster's work is important:

Unauthorized water use can impact those who hold legal water rights, and limits the amount of water available for economic development and the environment. Watermasters investigate possible unauthorized uses to ensure that our limited water supply is shared fairly.

### Contact information:

Thomas Perkow  
Columbia River Watermaster  
(509) 662-0512  
[tper@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:tper@ecy.wa.gov)

### Outside Agency Contact:

John Stuhlmiller  
Washington State Farm Bureau  
(360) 528-2903  
[jstuhlmiller@wsfb.com](mailto:jstuhlmiller@wsfb.com)

### Program Vision

Preserve and enhance the standard of living for the people of Washington by strengthening the state's economy and restoring and protecting the Columbia Basin's unique natural environment.

### Program Mission

Aggressively pursue development of water supplies to benefit both instream and out-of-stream water uses.

### Special accommodations:

If you need this publication in an alternate format, call the Columbia River Basin Water Management Program at 509-575-2490. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

The watermaster will investigate these discrepancies to determine if the water use is authorized.

### **Bringing Unauthorized Water Use into Compliance**

If the investigation reveals unauthorized water use, the watermaster will work with the user to resolve the problem. Technical assistance will be provided to bring them into compliance. If the user fails or refuses to voluntarily comply, Ecology is authorized to issue enforcement orders and penalties.

### **More Information About Watermasters at Ecology**

To learn more about the duties of Ecology's watermasters, please visit our compliance web site:  
[http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/comp\\_enforce/comp\\_enfor.html](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/comp_enforce/comp_enfor.html)