

WATER TREATMENT PLANT GENERAL PERMIT

Addendum to the Fact Sheet
Appendix E: Response to Comments

May 6, 2024



SUMMARY OF MAJOR PERMIT CHANGES

In finalizing this permit, the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) considered all of the public comments received during the public comment period. Ecology received only written comments, as no comments were received during oral testimony at the public hearings held on April 22 and 23, 2024.

This is a summary of the significant changes made to the Water Treatment Plant General Permit (WTPGP) in response to the public comments received between March 20, 2024 and May 03, 2024.

- Added definitions for Significant Contributor of Pollutants, Wellhead protection area, and Wellhead sanitary control area.
- Added new permit condition S-2.4 Discharges into Wellhead Protection Areas.

Additional minor changes to permit wording and punctuation have been made to correct formatting, grammar, and improve clarity.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Ecology published a draft Water Treatment Plant General Permit on March 20, 2024 for public comment. The public comment period ended May 3, 2024 at 11:59 PM. During the comment period, Ecology conducted two public hearings and workshop webinars. Ecology also accepted public comments via an electronic comment form on the permit website and email.

Ecology considered all comments in preparing the final permit. This response to comments document describes Ecology’s response to each commenter and any changes to the permit that resulted from the comment. Ecology received 2 comments during the public comment period. Each comment is numbered. The comment number that corresponds to each commenter is given in Table 1. These numbers allow the commenter to find Ecology’s response to their comments. Comments may be summarized; full text of all comments received by Ecology can be found at the [Water Treatment Plants General Permit](#)¹ web page.

The response to comments is organized in two sections:

[Section 1](#): Table of Commenters

[Section 2](#): Ecology’s Response to Comments on the Permit and Related Documents

Section 1: Table of Commenters and Comment Numbers

Table 1: Commenters

Commenter Name	Affiliation	Comment Number(s)
Anonymous	N/A	1-3
Nikki Guillot	Washington State Department of Health	4-8

¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Permits-certifications/Water-treatment-plants>

Section 2: Comments on the Permit

Comments and Responses

1. **S-2.3—I would like to voice my opinion on the Draft Water Treatment Permit for Washington State after recently attending the hearing on April 22nd at 9am detailing the different changes made for the 2024 permit. As an incoming college student and Kirkland resident, I am highly interested in how clean water comes to our communities equitably. I agree with many of the changes added into this new permit, especially with the tighter restrictions for dumping in pH impaired waters as it will aid in the protection of water bodies.**

Response:

Thank you for the comment. Ecology Agrees that protecting impaired water bodies is critical to our mission.

2. **S-1.1.2 – One area I had a slight concern about was the Significant Contributors of Pollutants. I agree with the idea that Washington state should have the right to determine permit coverage for facilities that produce 35,000 or less gallons of water in order to protect water quality. The section then moved on to address that coverage may be required if the facility is a "significant contributor of pollutants" - I was wondering what the exact threshold for this would be, and how it would be made sure that it remains the standard for all facilities?**

Response:

Significant Contributor of Pollutant(s) (SCOP) means a facility determined by Ecology to contribute a significant amount(s) of a pollutant(s) to waters of the State.

Significant Amount means an amount of a pollutant in a discharge that is amenable to available and reasonable methods of prevention, control, or treatment; or an amount of a pollutant that has a reasonable potential to cause a violation of surface or ground water quality standards or sediment management standards.

These definitions have been added to the permit. To demonstrate that a facility is a SCOP, Ecology would compare samples from the facility to the discharge limits and benchmarks contained in the Water Treatment Plant General Permit (WTPGP) and to the applicable Water Quality Standards. If the facility samples indicate that the facility may cause or contribute to a violation of any water quality standard, then Ecology may pursue a SCOP designation.

3. **General – Lastly, I had noticed that in the permit there were no details on the tools in place that are aiding water treatment plants in more rural areas or underfunded plants that might not be able to sample as frequently or uphold the stricter standards outlined in the permit. Perhaps Washington State could outline a section in the permit that describes how underfunded WTAs can get extra support if needed so the community can get clean water?**

Response:

We recognize that implementing all permit requirements will incur expenses for facilities. Ecology has tried to minimize the cost and burden of complying with this permit to the extent that is legal and feasible. Please see the Small Business Economic Impact Analysis on the [WTPGP webpage](#)² for more information on financial costs of complying with the permit.

Identifying sources of funding for Water Treatment Plant improvement and operation costs is beyond the scope of this permit. However, the Washington State Department of Health manages the [Drinking Water State Revolving Fund](#),³ which can assist with drinking water infrastructure improvements.

- 4. Definitions – Same definitions for winery general permit-Wellhead protection area: Wellhead protection area (WHPA) means protective areas associated with public drinking water sources established by water systems and approved or assigned by the state department of health. (WAC 365-190- 030(23))**

Response:

Ecology has revised the permit language to include this definition of a Wellhead Protection Area.

- 5. Definitions – Same definitions for winery general permit- Wellhead sanitary control area: A sanitary control area (SCA) is 100' radius for wells & 200' radius for spring sources, unless DOH has approved a smaller area. (WAC 246-290-135(2)(b))**

Response:

Ecology has revised the permit language to include this definition of a Wellhead sanitary control area.

- 6. Fact Sheet Appendix H – Fact sheet indicates "Based to the intermittent nature of the discharges, the relatively low concentrations of these pollutants in the discharges, and Ecology's best professional judgement, the discharges from WTP's covered by this permit are not likely to pose a reasonable threat to aquatic life, human health, or the environment." But Appendix H shows a YES affirming there is a potential for human health risk for Iron and Manganese to contaminate groundwater.**

² <https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Permits-certifications/Water-treatment-plants>

³ <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/drinking-water/water-system-assistance/drinking-water-state-revolving-fund-dwsrf>

Response:

Table H-6 shown in appendix H of the fact sheet is adapted from a form designed to assess discharges to surface water. For the purposes of this discharge to groundwater analysis, we used the information from these tables to further consider impacts to groundwater. The reasoning behind not implementing a permit limit for iron or manganese is found on page 23 of the fact sheet.

- 7. Fact Sheet Definitions – Fact sheet indicates under "discharges to land" arsenic in filter backwash effluent - "The Washington State Department of Health has implemented a risk reduction/ pollution prevention wellhead protection policy which prohibits the discharge of filter backwash within the short-term recharge areas of public drinking water wells" The definition of WHPA must be updated to reflect these are PWS determinations and not DOH.**

Response:

This Response to Comments document amends the Fact Sheet. Ecology accepts this definition of a Wellhead Protection Area and has included it in the WTPGP.

- 8. Appendix C – Can the manganese and iron description follow a similar template to arsenic and look at WHPAs in a risk-based assessment?**

Response: This Response to Comments document amends the Fact Sheet. Ecology agrees that Wellhead Protection Areas are entitled to special consideration as a special protection area under WAC 173-200-090. This includes protection from discharges containing iron and manganese. To ensure that Wellhead Protection areas are protected from pollution in backwash wastewater discharges, Ecology has added a new permit condition, "S-2.4 Discharges into Wellhead Protection Areas" to the WTPGP permit. This section requires permittees that discharge wastewater to a designated WHPA to meet relevant groundwater quality standards. Ecology will implement a review of facility data to assess the risk of covered facilities discharging wastewater that would cause or contribute to an exceedance of groundwater quality standards (Chapter 173-200 WAC) in designated Wellhead Protection Areas (WHPA). If Ecology finds a substantial risk of a facility contaminating a WHPA, we will apply specific monitoring requirements or restrictions to that groundwater discharge.

More information about WHPAs, including a map of wellhead protection areas, can be found at the [Washington State Department of Health's Source Water Protection webpage](https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/drinking-water/source-water/source-water-protection)⁴.

⁴ <https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/drinking-water/source-water/source-water-protection>