

## Streamflow Restoration Planning Update



### Why is watershed planning important?

Streamflow restoration planning helps improve rivers and streams for salmon and provides water for rural homes in Washington.

### More information

Please visit the Streamflow Restoration planning webpage<sup>1</sup>.

### Contact us

We will update this publication as the process advances.  
Please email your questions to [WRProjects@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:WRProjects@ecy.wa.gov)

### ADA Accommodations

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6872 or email at [WRPubs@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:WRPubs@ecy.wa.gov), or visit [ecology.wa.gov/accessibility](http://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility). For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.

### Streamflow Restoration Act passed to boost rivers and streams

In January 2018, the Legislature passed the streamflow restoration law ([RCW 90.94](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=90.94)<sup>2</sup>) to help enhance streamflows.

The law directed 15 local planning groups to develop new watershed plans or update existing plans to offset the impacts from new domestic permit-exempt wells and achieve a net ecological benefit (NEB). The law set legislative deadlines for plans to be locally approved and adopted by Ecology.

### Ecology is finalizing five watershed plans

The streamflow restoration law ([RCW 90.94.030](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=90.94.030)<sup>3</sup>) also established a pathway for plan preparation, adoption, and rulemaking for incomplete plans. Following the law, Ecology is finalizing watershed plans based on the local planning groups' work in five watersheds or Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs):

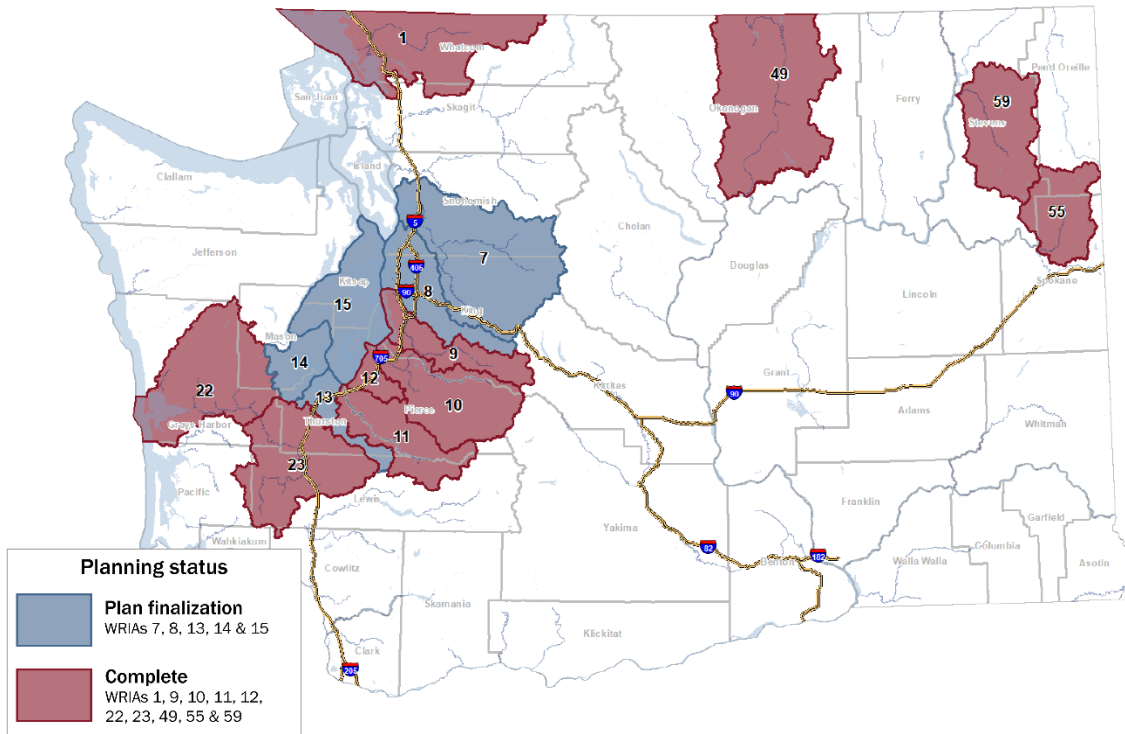
- WRIA 7 – Snohomish
- WRIA 8 – Cedar-Sammamish
- WRIA 13 – Deschutes
- WRIA 14 – Kennedy-Goldsborough
- WRIA 15 – Kitsap

<sup>1</sup> [ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Streamflow-restoration/Streamflow-restoration-planning](http://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Streamflow-restoration/Streamflow-restoration-planning)

<sup>2</sup> [app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=90.94](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=90.94)

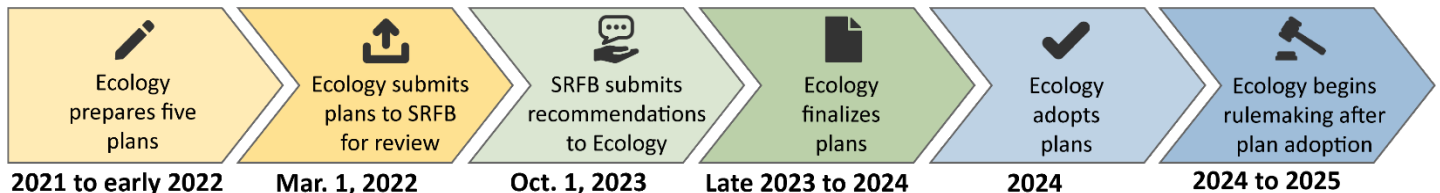
<sup>3</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=90.94.030>

## Streamflow restoration planning status



## Timeline for plan finalization

Ecology is coordinating with the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to finalize the remaining five plans. The timeline below follows the Inter Agency Agreement between Ecology and RCO.



- **Jul. 2021 to Feb. 2022:** Ecology prepares five final draft plans.
- **Mar. 1, 2022:** Ecology submits plans to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) for technical review.
- **Oct. 1, 2023:** SRFB completes technical review of the plans and submits recommendations to Ecology.
- **Late 2023 to 2024:** Ecology considers SRFB’s recommendations, and may amend the final draft plans in late 2023.
- **2024:** Ecology adopts plans.
- **2024 to 2025:** Ecology initiates rulemaking within six months of plan adoption.

**Rulemaking** is a public process guided by the Washington Administrative Procedure Act (APA), ch. 34.05 RCW. Rulemaking will be undertaken consistent with the requirements of the streamflow restoration law (RCW 90.94.030) and must be completed within two years.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Which watersheds were part of the streamflow restoration law and what was the local planning process?**

**A:** The streamflow restoration law (RCW 90.94) established two processes for watershed planning:

1. Previously established planning groups in seven watersheds (WRIAs 1, 11, 22, 23, 49, 55, and 59) updated their existing watershed plans under chapter RCW 90.94.020.
2. New Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committees were created in eight watersheds (WRIAs 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15) to develop new watershed plans under chapter RCW 90.94.030. The law required that all committee members approve the plan before submitting to Ecology for adoption. Plans in WRIAs 9, 10, and 12 were adopted by June 30, 2021, the legislative deadline. Plans in WRIAs 7, 8, 13, 14, and 15 were not completed by the deadline and will be completed as required by RCW 90.94.030(3)(h).

**Q: Why did Ecology not adopt watershed plans for WRIAs 7, 8, 13, 14 and 15?**

**A:** Despite working diligently for two and a half years to develop a draft plan, the committees did not reach agreement by all members to complete their planning process.

**Q: How will Ecology use the draft plans prepared by the committees?**

**A:** As Ecology develops the final draft plans, it will follow, as the committees did, the law, POL 2094 and the [NEB guidance](#)<sup>4</sup>. Ecology will also consider all available information, including draft materials developed by the committees.

**Q: Is Ecology required to conduct rulemaking if a committee did not approve their plan or Ecology could not adopt the plan by June 30, 2021?**

**A:** Yes, in the case where a committee did not approve their plan and Ecology could not adopt it, the law requires Ecology to initiate rulemaking within six months after it goes through the process (see timeline graphic above) and adopts the plan. Once rulemaking begins, the law requires the final rule to be completed within two years.

**Q: Will local committees be involved in finalizing plans for WRIAs 7, 8, 13, 14 and 15?**

**A:** No, the committees worked on their plans from Fall 2018 through June 30, 2021, the legislative deadline.

**Q: Will tribes continue to play a role as the planning progresses through this five step process?**

**A:** The Department of Ecology and RCO, as agencies of the State of Washington, have on-going relationships and conversations with each of the tribes interested in this work. Ecology maintains its commitment to coordinate with our governmental partners as we collectively move toward optimal outcomes for water and instream resources to meet the needs of people and the environment.

**Q: How is this planning process related to Ecology's statewide competitive streamflow grant offering?**

**A:** Projects identified in the adopted watershed plans or as part of rulemaking receive some funding priority in the statewide competitive granting process (see the Streamflow Restoration Funding rule, [Chapter 173-566 WAC](#)).<sup>5</sup>

**Q: How can I track progress of the planning?**

**A:** For more information and updates on the process, visit the streamflow restoration [planning webpage](#)<sup>6</sup> or [subscribe to our email list](#)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup><https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/1911079.html>

<sup>5</sup><https://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=173-566>

<sup>6</sup><https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Streamflow-restoration/Streamflow-restoration-planning>

<sup>7</sup> [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAECY/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=WAECY\\_115](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAECY/subscriber/new?topic_id=WAECY_115)