

Focus on: Improving Air Quality in Overburdened Communities

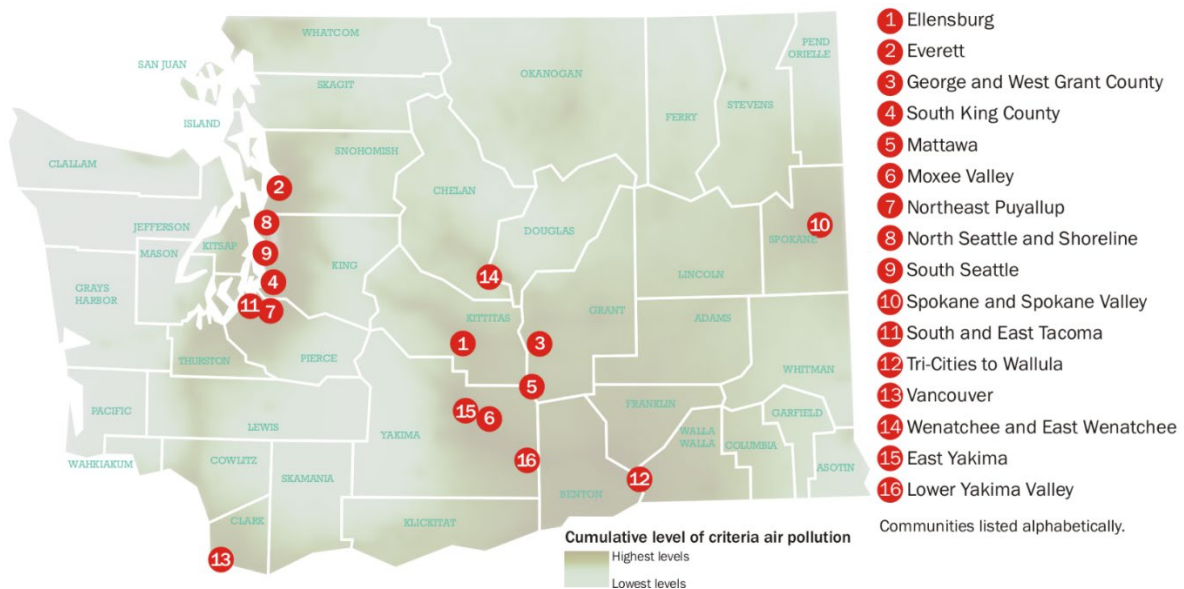


We understand many communities in Washington experience air pollution. Under the Climate Commitment Act, Ecology is working on an initiative to reduce “criteria” air pollution in the Washington communities it most affects. Criteria air pollutants are six common substances known to harm human health and the environment: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particle pollution, and sulfur dioxide.

Communities identified

Using multiple sources of air quality data and environmental justice information, we have identified 16 areas of the state containing multiple overburdened communities, neighborhoods, and towns that are highly impacted by criteria air pollution. The places are a mix of urban, suburban, and rural. They vary greatly in population, from about 1,500 to more than 200,000 people. They also range vastly in area, from less than 3 square miles to 173 square miles. Collectively, they represent more than 1.2 million people, or about 15.5% of Washington’s population.

We heard from Tribes, the public, members of the Environmental Justice Council, and other environmental justice advocates about identifying the people and places in Washington that are overburdened and highly impacted by criteria air pollution. We have not yet included any Tribal communities in this initiative. We are continuing to consult with Tribal governments and anticipate adding Tribal communities soon.



This list is intended for the purposes outlined in the [environmental justice review](#)¹ section of the Climate Commitment Act.

¹ <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.65.020>

Overburdened communities table

The table below details each overburdened community, including community size, population, and air pollutants of concern. The listed areas ranked high on the Washington Environmental Health Disparities map and/or EPA's EJScreen mapping tool, tools that show where vulnerable populations face more risk or exposure to pollution. We also looked at other factors: social and economic differences, historic redlining, health care access, and known health disparities, such as increased asthma and lower life expectancy.

This Overburdened communities table serves as a list for the purposes outlined in Section 3 the [environmental review section](#)² of the Climate Commitment Act.

Area	Estimated population	Size in approx. mi ²	Elevated air pollutants
Ellensburg	17,500	6	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
Everett	86,395	17	Fine particles (PM _{2.5})
George and West Grant County	1,500	118	Fine particles (PM _{2.5})
South King County	207,973	68	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
Mattawa	3,600	12	Fine particles (PM _{2.5})
Moxee Valley	3,000	38	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
Northeast Puyallup	9,629	3	Cumulative criteria air pollution
North Seattle and Shoreline	41,081	5	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
South Seattle	198,539	44	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
Spokane and Spokane Valley	150,108	42	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
South and East Tacoma	133,700	28	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
Tri-Cities to Wallula	113,522	173	Particle pollution (PM _{2.5} , PM ₁₀), cumulative criteria air pollution, and ozone
Vancouver	109,900	29	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
Wenatchee and East Wenatchee	32,312	10	Fine particles (PM _{2.5})
East Yakima	60,640	16	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution
Lower Yakima Valley	55,487	157	Fine particles (PM _{2.5}) and cumulative criteria air pollution

StoryMap about the communities

Our [Overburdened Communities Highly Impacted by Air Pollution StoryMap](#)³ describes each of the 16 communities in detail, including how and why they were identified. These descriptions are intended to provide key community characteristics and show potentially vulnerable populations and criteria air pollution concerns. These descriptions are based on the best currently available information.

Visit our Overburdened Communities StoryMap.



² <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.65.020>

³ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c10bdbfc69984a9d85346be1a23f6338>

Next steps

Reducing criteria air pollution in the identified overburdened communities will happen in stages over multiple years.

Next steps include:

- Working with Tribal governments to identify which of their communities are highly impacted by criteria air pollution.
- Engaging with identified communities as this work progresses.
- Expanding our air monitoring network in the identified communities.
- Collecting and analyzing data about criteria air pollutants affecting these communities.
- Acting to reduce criteria air pollution in the identified communities, as more state funding becomes available.
- Reporting every two years about the air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and health impacts in each community.
- Re-evaluating the list of communities every six years.

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<https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>