



Focus

Water cleanup planning in the Dungeness watershed

Parts of the Dungeness River watershed are experiencing water-quality problems. Fecal coliform bacteria have been measured at levels that exceed state water-quality standards in Matriotti and Meadowbrook creeks and, in irrigation ditches.

These creeks -- all tributaries of the Dungeness River -- flow into Dungeness Bay, where some commercial shellfish beds are facing closures because of fecal coliform contamination.

Fecal coliform bacteria is a major concern because its presence indicates that human or animal waste are entering the water. In addition, fecal coliform bacteria at sufficient concentrations in shellfish can be harmful for human consumption. Typical sources of the bacteria include failing septic systems, surface water runoff from areas used by domestic or wild animals, and from marine bird and mammal waste.

Federal law requires cleanup of polluted waters

Federal law requires states to identify sources of pollution in waters that fall short of water quality standards, and to determine how much pollution needs to be reduced for the water body to remain healthy. Using the source and allocation information, Ecology and local interests develop strategies for achieving the necessary reduction or elimination of pollution. The result is a water cleanup plan.

Water cleanup planning process

Ecology is in the process of developing a water cleanup plan for Matriotti and Meadowbrook creeks and the Dungeness River. Building on work done by the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe (the Tribe), Clallam Conservation District and Clallam County, Ecology began a water quality study last November. The Tribe and Clallam County will work with Ecology to conduct the study.

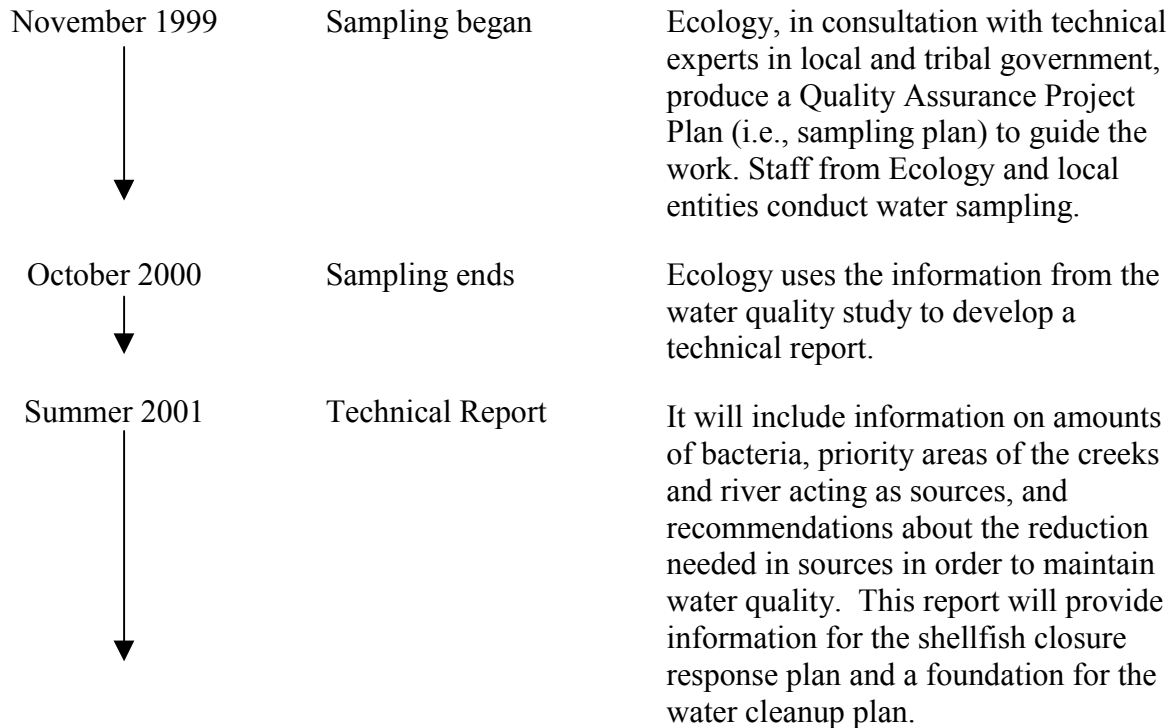
Ecology, Clallam County and the Tribe will then work with the Dungeness River Management Team, the Clallam Conservation District, shellfish growers, the state Department of Health, landowners, and other interested parties to develop the required water cleanup plan. The water cleanup plan will be integrated with the shellfish closure response strategy now being developed.

When complete, the water-quality study and cleanup plan for bacteria will identify:

- The amount and sources of fecal coliform bacteria in reaches of the creeks and river.

- Targets for the amount of fecal coliform bacteria reductions required to assure healthy water quality in the creeks and river.
- Actions for reducing the pollution to target levels.
- A monitoring plan to assess effectiveness.

The exact timeline to conduct a water-quality study and develop a cleanup plan may vary. Here is an approximate schedule for the process in the Dungeness.



A typical water cleanup plan consists of a variety of economically feasible actions and best-management practices. The amount of time needed to develop this plan is variable. The public will have the opportunity to comment on the proposed water cleanup plan (see below).

How you can participate

We need your help. Improving the water quality will require action by many people. If you would like to be on a mailing list to receive information related to water quality in the Dungeness watershed, and to receive information on related public meetings and comment periods, please call (360) 417-2277. The Quality Assurance Project Plan (water quality sampling plan) is available at <http://www.wa.gov/ecology/biblio/0003008.html> and at the Sequim Library (ask the reference librarian).

For more information on the Matriotti Creek/Dungeness River Water Cleanup Plan, contact Jeannette Barreca at Ecology by e-mail at jbar461@ecy.wa.gov; by phone at (360) 407-6556; or by mail at P.O. Box 47775, Olympia WA 98504-7775.