



A Plan for Protecting Washington's Waters

Water Quality Program Strategic Plan

September 2001

Revised April 2005

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Prepared by:
Stephen Bernath in conjunction with the Strategic Planning Committee

Revised by:
Joe Witzak in conjunction with the Program Management Team

Strategic Planning Committee
Carl Nuechterlein, Dave Peeler, David Roberts, Ben Bonkowski, Bill Obert, Brian Lynn
Gordon Wiggerhaus, Karol Erickson, Will Kendra, Kathy Cupps, Kelsey Highfill, Pat Irle
Steve Carley

Washington State Department of Ecology
Water Quality Program

For more information, please contact

Stephen Bernath or Joe Witzak

360-407-6459

360-407-6499

sber461@ecy.wa.gov

jwit461@ecy.wa.gov

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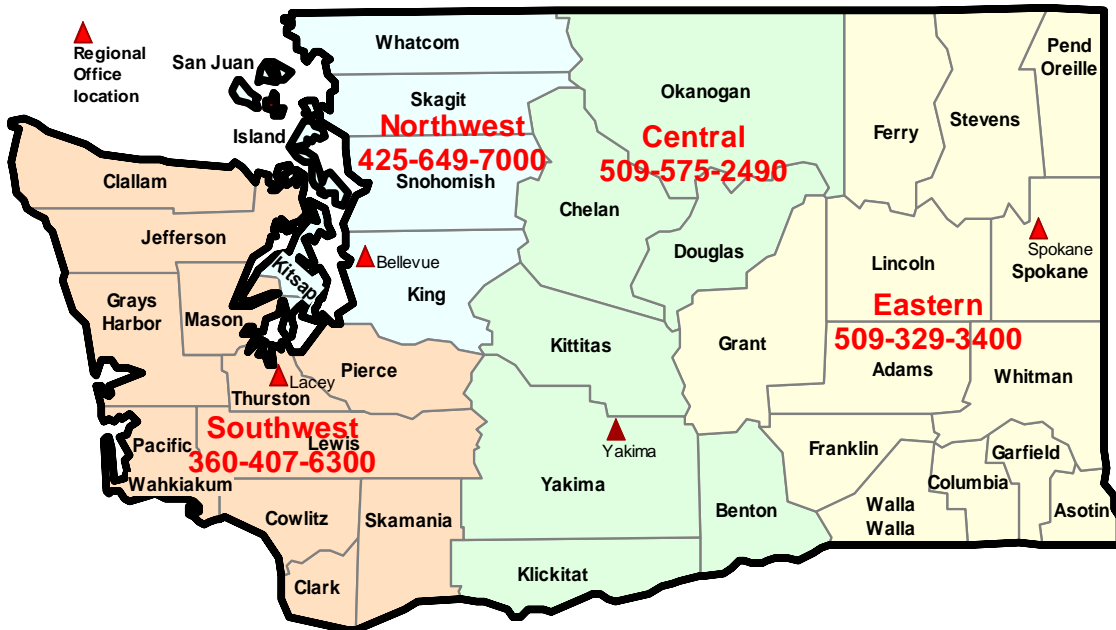


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Table of Contents

PROLOGUE	1
STRATEGIC PLAN 1992	1
WHAT IT CONTAINED — WHAT IT DID	1
HOW THE WATER QUALITY PROGRAM HAS CHANGED SINCE THE 1992 STRATEGIC PLAN	1
THE CHANGING WORLD OF TODAY AND TOMORROW	4
ADDRESSING THESE CHALLENGES	5
WHY PLAN?	5
WHAT’S NEXT	6
WATER QUALITY PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT:	8
ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS	8
<i>Goal 1: Prevent water pollution including aquatic habitat loss, and ensure adequate water quality and quantity to meet beneficial uses (pollution prevention).</i>	8
<i>Goal 2: Clean up water pollution to restore beneficial uses and aquatic habitat (cleanup pollution).</i>	12
<i>Goal 3: Help communities make sustainable choices that reduce and prevent water quality problems (support sustainable communities and natural resources).</i>	16
PUBLIC SERVICE GOALS	20
<i>Goal 1: Provide water quality partners with technical assistance, financial support, and superior customer service.</i>	20
<i>Goal 2: Provide useful information for the public, partners and agency and involve stakeholders in decision making.</i>	22
<i>Goal 3: Support all staff so that we can be successful as an organization and as individuals.</i>	24

Prologue

Change is just about the only constant for the Water Quality Program. We need to accept change, understand it, anticipate it, and guide our work accordingly.

As Dr. Peter Bishop, consultant to Water Quality's strategic planning preparations, states, "Change is hard but stagnation is fatal."

As an indicator of change, the reader will note the references in this prologue that are hotlinks to Web sites with detailed information to the topics that are highlighted here. The birth and growth of the Internet are strongly influencing the way we operate and communicate. If you are reading this document electronically, just click on the Web site addresses to go there.

Strategic plan 1992

Water Quality staff prepared a strategic plan in 1992 to guide the program for the next 18 years. Reading it now and looking back over the years since it was written, the plan seems remarkably insightful in charting a course through an uncertain future.

What it contained — What it did

The 1992 strategic plan (available on Ecology's Web site at the following address: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/9295.html>) set goals and objectives for two, six, and eighteen years. It focused our work and gave us measurable targets to assess our progress in meeting objectives. Some of the objectives were met, while others remain elusive.

The major program accomplishment adopted by the program was the watershed approach – still a powerful driving force in the program today. Conceived originally as a way to manage an overwhelming workload, the watershed approach has proven useful as a tool to work holistically in river basins. Since expanded agency-wide, the concept of watershed is now embodied in state law (the Watershed Planning Act, HB 2514, Chapter 90.82 RCW). Strategic thinking in 1992 has reaped water quality benefits for years.

How the Water Quality Program has changed since the 1992 Strategic Plan

A new major focus for the water quality program is the development of water cleanup plans or TMDLs. This change came from a citizen lawsuit against United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) involving a somewhat obscure and unappreciated section of the federal Clean Water Act for failing to implement Section 303 of the Act. This section deals with impaired waters and the need to develop water cleanup plans, known as total maximum daily loads or TMDLs for short. Ecology became party to a lawsuit settlement that required some 1,500 TMDLs to be completed over a 15-year period. The lawsuit settlement agreement with the US EPA and environmental plaintiffs has had profound impacts on our work. The consent decree redirected more of our efforts toward cleaning up polluted waters listed under Section

303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act. See the WQP Web site at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/index.html>.

Another significant change in the Water Quality Program since our last plan is the inclusion of the Water Quality Financial Assistance Program. The merger provided better integration of tools such as grants and loans, permits, education, and compliance.

Decentralization of some functions or “regionalization” took place since 1992. A new breed of generalists became a single point of contact for regulated facilities, handling permitting, inspections, and financial assistance. Realizing the complexities of these disparate functions, recent years have seen a slow evolution back to selective specialization of functions.

Point sources, at one time, discharged the greatest amount of the pollution entering our rivers and estuaries. Now nonpoint source pollution – diffuse pollution from urban and rural areas – is the primary source impairing our lakes, rivers, estuaries, and ground water. To address nonpoint pollution problems, Ecology has prepared the *Washington's Water Quality Management Plan to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution*; it can be found at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/nonpoint/index.html>. It establishes a framework for state and local governments to solve nonpoint pollution problems.

New statutes and rules also drove change in the water quality program. These changes included: the Dairy Nutrient Management Act, the Forest and Fish Report and associated statutes and rules, the Growth Management Act, and the Reclaimed Water and Water Conservation law. Another significant legislative change that occurred during the 2004 session was Senate Bill 6415 which brought all the stormwater stakeholders together to define how we move forward with new EPA stormwater rules. This law defines processes, timelines, and requirements that we must implement to help the state control stormwater pollution. It also provided a significant number of staff resources to meet these commitments.

The Dairy Nutrient Management Act of 1998, as embodied in Senate Bill 6161, now RCW 90.64, addressed pollution associated with dairies. Pollution from livestock can be a major source of fecal contamination, nitrates, and eroded soil, all of which impact our surface and ground water across the state. This pollution is a public health concern for our drinking water supplies and commercial and recreational shellfish industry. Initial producer resistance was overcome, and finally the industry, environmentalists, and regulators came together and hammered out this solution. However, during the 2003 legislative session, most of the responsibility for implementing this law was transferred to the Washington State Department of Agriculture. This transition was but another major influence on the program.

The forestry industry in the headwaters of our rivers poses a threat to salmonid habitat and water quality. New rules promulgated by the Forest Practices Board, with Ecology’s concurrence, are designed to protect water quality and the environment. The forest and fish initiative is especially directed toward protecting aquatic resources including threatened and endangered salmonid species as well as six riparian-dependent amphibians.

A major negotiation effort, patterned somewhat on lessons learned in the Timber, Fish, and Wildlife (TFW) and Forest and Fish processes, was undertaken. Termed AFW for Agriculture, Fish and Water, the negotiations involved farmers, irrigators, resource agencies, and others to

protect water and habitat while assuring farmers a viable future. At the conclusion, the group reached agreement on best management practices for the agricultural community.

The Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan (<http://www.psat.wa.gov>) has focused public and agency attention on this important estuary as well as increased oversight and accountability. The Puget Sound Management Plan also focused attention on the water quality impacts of stormwater to Puget Sound. New federal regulations (stormwater phase 2) will expand that effort statewide over the coming years.

Whole Effluent Toxicity Testing is a new tool helping the point source facility managers assess and reduce the impacts of treated wastewater discharged to the environment.

A new partnership with EPA has evolved over recent years. Authorized by Congress in the National Environmental Performance Partnership System, this partnership has fostered an improved working relationship and better communication between Ecology and Region 10 of EPA. It builds on the strengths of each agency and is described in biennial Performance Partnership Agreements (PPA) that are posted on the agencies' Web sites for the public (see Ecology's Web site at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/ppa.html>).

HB 1010 encouraged the regulatory agencies of the state to make sure there were opportunities for technical assistance to the small businesses before formal enforcement actions took place.

There has been a continuing move to use dollars intended to provide financial assistance for water quality improvement projects from grants to loans. There has been a dramatic increase by both federal and state government to demonstrate the environmental value for our grant and loan programs.

New state reclaimed water and water conservation legislation was adopted that emphasized the re-use of highly treated municipal wastewater.

More attention is being focused on persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs) and mixing zones for wastewater discharges.

Since the turn of the century, changes in the economy and world events have led to budget shortfalls for both federal and state governments. A number of budget resources have shrunk resulting in the program needing to reduce some of our efforts and let some of our staff go. Along with reductions came increased attention to demonstrating the efficiency and effectiveness of our work. The Department of Ecology undertook a large "transformation" effort to make our business practices more consistent with and considerate of the business needs of the industries, communities, and citizens we regulate and support. We were asked to look for new and improved ways to deliver our services and implement our regulations as partners with our stakeholders while still being protective of the environment.

The changing world of today and tomorrow

The Water Quality Program (WQP) is in the midst of change that will affect our work over the coming years. In some cases, we have already begun to adapt our work to the changes and pressures from the external environment. In others, we have just begun to recognize the need but have not institutionalized new approaches to meet the challenges before us. A few of today's changes are described below.

The listing of salmon, trout, and steelhead under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) is profoundly affecting how state and local governments manage their natural resources such as the land and water. To protect and restore these species and to avoid federal agency intervention in resource management, the state and many local governments are taking major steps to address harvest, hatcheries, hydropower, and habitat (the 4 Hs). The latter two are of special significance to the Water Quality Program. The Governor's Plan for the Recovery of Salmon and the State Agencies Action Plan set expectations for the WQP (among many others) to work toward salmon recovery.

The integration of our work with others is something we have talked about for years. We have taken steps in that direction but have not come very far in making it a reality. The combined drivers of ESA, TMDLs for temperature, environmental monitoring, and maturation of the watershed approach will move us in that direction. Salmon recovery will require both high quality and abundant water through attainment of water quality standards and the setting of in-stream flows that mimic natural conditions. Water quality monitoring and management will expand from traditional chemistry to include benthic organisms, riparian conditions, and watershed health. Ecology's four water programs are now focused on developing their individual tools to meet today's challenges. Tomorrow's focus will shift to integrating those tools to become much more effective.

We are in the middle of a technological revolution (and have been since the invention of the steam engine). Today's rapid advances in information technology are straining our ability to keep up with the changes. Our investments in this technology today, however, will provide valuable management tools in the years to come. Our challenge is to make the commitment to that investment. The natural environment is complex, and we must employ the latest technology to monitor its condition and evaluate the results of our work. We need to work effectively with other resource agencies and local governments. We can support each other's work without duplicating it through the exchange of information and ideas.

In contrast to the lightning speed of technology advances, social and political institutions move at a slower pace. As a result, we will continue to be challenged in our work by complex laws, conflicting demands, and public suspicion or even open hostility toward government. Taxpayer revolt and competition for limited resources will limit our ability to fully implement our mission. We must always look for ways to increase our effectiveness and enlist the support of others. There are, for example, many talented, concerned, and energetic members of the public working to protect and restore our natural environment. We need to look for opportunities to enhance both our efforts and their efforts through collaboration.

In summary, the future seems to offer us more challenges, particularly in the areas of:

- Urban growth pressure and resulting impacts on water quality
- More demands on limited water resources
- Need for and increased opportunities for expanded partnerships
- Enhanced oversight and greater accountability
- Competition for scarce financial assistance resources

Addressing these challenges

To meet these challenges, the Water Quality Program undertook the task of updating its 1992 Strategic Plan in the spring of 2000. The program convened two workshops to gather ideas from program and other Ecology staff and external stakeholders. Facilitated by Dr. Peter Bishop, a futurist from the University of Houston at Clear Lake, workshop participants were guided through a planning process that examined the pressures, trends, and events that have shaped and are shaping the program's future. The workshops resulted in a number of ideas and concepts from staff and stakeholder input to help the program prepare for the future and develop a strategic plan to guide us there.

In the summer of 2000, a committee was also formed to further carry out the update process. This committee consisted of Stephen Bernath (convener), Carl Neuchterlein, Dave Peeler, David Roberts, Paul Stasch (before he left the program), Kathy Cupps, Steve Carley, Tim Hilliard, Pat Irle, Brian Lynn, Ben Bonkowski, and Will Kendra (Karol Erickson filled-in during leave). This committee worked diligently to first review and update the goals and objectives of the program. These were reviewed with the whole water quality staff at their All Staff meeting in October. In addition, the committee drafted examples of activities that might be carried out to achieve the new goals and objectives. These examples were then taken on the road to each section in the program and three other programs in the agency for comment. The results of that feedback plus the addition of recognizing existing efforts and obstacles to the program are encompassed in this strategic plan.

In 2003, the program management team reviewed the activities identified in this plan. They developed a Strategic Plan Status Report which lists each activity identified in the plan, a manager responsible for each activity, and a brief status report showing how the program is progressing on each activity. This review provided a good opportunity to keep the strategic thinking in front of the team and prompted some renewed efforts in certain areas.

In 2005, the program management team and unit supervisors met to update the Strategic Plan Status Report, identify actions that should be included in the 2005-2007 biennial plan, and prepared a revision to the plan itself. The revision captured significant changes in direction since the 2001 plan was released. It also updated actions to reflect current thinking and progress. It was agreed to make the Strategic Plan Status Report available on the program's intranet site. It is anticipated that a more thorough revision of the plan involving staff input and external review may be needed during the 2007-2009 biennium.

Why plan?

The development of a strategic plan is an intense effort. Involving all program staff in the process takes precious time away from day-to-day tasks and other priority activities. Why, one

might ask, spend the time on planning? For one thing, strategic planning helps us refocus our efforts toward the highest priority needs. From the discussion above, it is clear that the program and its operating environment have undergone tremendous changes over recent years, and the pace of change does not seem to be letting up. Our priorities must be consistent with this changing situation; and planning helps us identify, evaluate, and agree on a new set of priorities. These priorities will drive our work and how we go about it.

The strategic plan should also serve as a guide for Water Quality Program staff and managers in charting the future course of the program. The plan reflects the best thinking of all staff who contributed to its development. It should guide those who develop operational work plans, prepare grant applications, and develop long-term policy.

A written strategic plan is useful to communicate program focus, both internally and externally. Our audience is broad: other Ecology programs and natural resource agencies, the Legislature, local governments, environmental groups, the regulated community, and the general public. Communication enhances our work and the building of partnerships and helps us to be more effective.

Finally, planning and the setting of specific objectives help us to measure our success (or lack of it), to learn from our experiences, and to improve the whole process. Planning, tracking, and reporting are essential elements of our work today because of the increasing demands for accountability.

What's next

In the spring of odd-numbered years (2001, 2003, 2005....) the program prepares a biennial plan containing far more detailed information on what the program will be working on. The actions listed in this strategic document should be reviewed as part of developing the program biennial plans. However, the biennial planning process not only considers the program's on-going work and the actions identified in this strategic plan, but also a number of external drivers, such as legislative mandates, federal grant programs, the Puget Sound Action Plan, and the Performance Partnership Agreement with EPA. All of these inter-connected factors can result in changes to our strategic thinking.

Therefore, this plan must be a living document that is updated on a periodic basis. If the plan is not monitored at least every two years it will become shelf art. In order for the plan to be a useful tool, the plan needs to be referred to when direction is sought and updated when major drivers change. In addition, it needs to clearly have the buy-in of the program and executive management.

How the Strategic Plan is Structured

The strategic plan contains three environmental goals and three public service goals. The environmental goals reflect the environmental direction that the program should go in the next 12 years (2001 through 2013). The public service goals reflect some of the tools (or the "How") that are necessary to achieve the environmental goals. For example, the program will want a

better compliance rate for municipalities, and one way to achieve better compliance is to make sure that financial assistance is focused where the need is greatest.

Under each goal is a set of objectives that addresses the specific direction the program would like to take in the next 12 years to move towards the goal. Specific activities are then identified within each of the objectives. These activities provide specific ideas that need to be carried out within a particular time period so that success can be measured. These activities include not only what we are currently doing, but also new ideas and actions which can strengthen our ability to meet the program's mission. The activities in the "First 4 Years" are expected to be addressed in 2001 through 2005. The activities underlined for each objective indicate what the program will try to implement in the 01-03 biennial plan. In order to track the program's progress against the plan, each activity is sequentially numbered throughout the plan. There are currently 218 activities listed in the plan and these numbers are used to cross-reference the plan with status report.

Finally, obstacles are identified to assist in identifying where roadblocks to success exist. This will help plan how to overcome the obstacles.

Water Quality Program Mission Statement:

To Protect and Restore Washington's Waters

Environmental Goals

Goal 1: Prevent water pollution, including aquatic habitat loss, and ensure adequate water quality and quantity to meet beneficial uses (*pollution prevention*).

Objective A: Surface and ground water quality standards protect beneficial uses.

Current Activities

1. Finish triennial review of water quality standards.
2. Coordinate with Toxics Cleanup Program on sediment standards.

Activities in the First 4 Years

3. Develop strategy for future triennial reviews of surface water quality standards addressing Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation, integration of instream flows and habitat protection, numeric biocriteria, and consideration of agency PBT activities.
4. Develop ability to do use-attainability analysis and link to water quality standards and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs).
5. Review the need and frequency for whole effluent toxicity (WET) testing.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

6. Implement water quality standards strategy.
7. Implement Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxics (PBT) strategy.
8. Coordinate ground and surface water standards and protection activities.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Beneficial uses in standards are perceived to be incompatible.

Objective B: Programs are designed to prevent nonpoint source pollution, hydrologic modification, and aquatic habitat loss. Programs are targeted at the highest priority needs and are effective.

Current Activities

9. Implement Washington's Water Quality Management Plan to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/9926.html>).
10. Provide technical assistance, financial assistance, and targeted enforcement to the agricultural community.
11. Provide technical assistance on stormwater.

Activities in the First 4 Years

12. Provide public education on the impacts of and solutions for nonpoint source pollution on water quality, hydrologic modification, and aquatic habitat loss.
13. Develop site-specific and statewide nonpoint source effectiveness monitoring program.
14. Develop a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation/Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO/AFO) strategy.
15. Adopt and implement best management practices (BMPs) and other recommendations for the Agricultural-Fish-Water (AFW) program as they become available.
16. Implement a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation/Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO/AFO) strategy.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

17. Work with Department of Health (DOH) to ensure Ground Water Quality Standards are implemented in the state's on-site program.

Objective C: All discharge permits are current, protect water quality, human health, and aquatic habitat; and include water conservation and pollution prevention measures.

Current Activities:

18. Continue "permit priority system" to manage permit workload.
19. Continue re-evaluation and streamlining of the permit program.
20. Provide site-specific technical assistance stormwater permits.
21. Register all dairies in the state and report progress to meeting requirements and state obligations of the Dairy Nutrient Management Act.
22. Implement Underground Injection Control (UIC) program.

23. Continue the ambient monitoring program.
24. Maintain overall permit backlog of less than 10%.

Activities in the First 4 Years

25. Require pollution prevention evaluation in all municipal/industrial planning documents.
26. Incorporate water conservation and pollution prevention planning into industrial wastewater discharge permits.
27. Participate in the Toxic Reduction Engineering Exchange (TREE).
28. Reduce the individual permit backlog to meet Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) targets. (Need to specify.)
29. Develop Phase 2 stormwater program for the west side.
30. Fully implement Phase 1 stormwater rules (co-permittees).
31. Revise UIC rules and implementation strategy to conform to EPA requirements.
32. Develop Phase 2 stormwater program for the eastside.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

33. Support necessary rule and statute changes and procedural changes to institute a 10-year waste discharge permit program.
34. Encourage reclaimed water as the primary means of managing discharges from municipal treatment facilities except when necessary to maintain instream flows.
35. Use results of fish tissue monitoring program to assess permit effectiveness.
36. Evaluate all point source permits to identify opportunities and advantages of zero discharge to industry groups.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Both federal and state laws need to change to allow for a 10-year discharge permit.

Objective D: All discharges are in compliance with permits, BMPs, or other requirements to protect Washington's waters.

Current Activities:

37. Review discharge monitoring report (DMR) for all permitted facilities to ensure compliance.
38. Conduct inspections on a regular schedule to evaluate permittees.

39. Issue compliance report annually.
40. Maintain and update permit writer's manual.
41. Continue to provide qualifying facilities the option of reduced monitoring for exemplary performance.
42. Issue permits with water quality-based effluent limits that protect water quality. These effluent limits also reflect any associated Waste Load Allocations (WLAs) that have been derived from completed Water Cleanup Plans/TMDLs for receiving water.
43. Maintain operator certification and outreach program.

Activities in the First 4 Years

44. Begin to actively monitor the implementation and effectiveness of nonpoint source controls including the Forest and Fish rules through the adaptive management process.
45. Develop a stormwater manual for eastern Washington.
46. Develop an approach for evaluating innovative solutions to wastewater discharges including considering cooperative relationships with universities and the private sector

Activities in Years 5 through 12

47. Develop economic incentives (fee restructuring, simplified monitoring, etc.) for facilities that remain in compliance and those that reduce overall pollutant load while maintaining service level.

Goal 2: Clean up water pollution to restore beneficial uses and aquatic habitat (clean up pollution).

Objective A: Water cleanup plans (TMDLs) are scheduled, completed, and implemented.

Current Activities

48. Evaluate policies and requirements for the 303d list to ensure appropriate listings.
49. Prioritize and schedule TMDLs.
50. Develop TMDLs (Ecology or in partnerships).
51. Implement TMDLs through permits, nonpoint source plans, and other means.
52. Develop 303(d) list of polluted waters with 4-part list called for in new federal rules.
53. Develop and implement an information management business plan For Water Quality Program and Environmental Assessment Program databases relating to monitoring, modeling, 303d list, TMDLs, and permits.

Activities in the First 4 years

54. Track and monitor implementation of TMDL requirements.
55. Establish a tracking and monitoring system for water quality on waters with completed TMDLs.
56. Provide technical assistance to the department of natural resources (DNR), landowners, and the United States Forest Service (USFS) related to water quality and the development of TMDLs on forestlands. Conduct effectiveness monitoring.
57. Evaluate the workload model, look for opportunities to streamline TMDL work, and seek appropriate funding levels.
58. Clarify the relationship between Clean Water Act (CWA) and ESA processes, including TMDLs, Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), other local plans, and other watershed planning programs.
59. Perform a successful pollutant trading pilot project linked to TMDL implementation.
60. Develop policies for application of general permits to water bodies on 303(d) list or with TMDLs.
61. Increase technical and policy support for other externally developed TMDLs or TMDL surrogates.
62. Develop a strategy to integrate instream flow targets with TMDLs.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

63. Conduct WQ monitoring in watersheds with completed TMDLs.
64. Reconcile Forests & Fish and Agriculture, Fish & Water accomplishments with the TMDL settlement agreement.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Lack of adequate and linked information databases.
- Lack of sufficient coordination with local governments, other agencies, and other watershed planning efforts.
- Political, technical, and financial constraints on implementation, desire, and/or capacity by local governments and private parties.
- Potential litigation over TMDLs and associated permits.

Objective B: Programs are designed to clean up nonpoint and point source pollution, remedy hydrologic modification, and restore aquatic habitat. Programs are targeted at the highest priority needs and are effective.

Current Activities

65. Target financial and technical assistance at highest priority problems and activities.
66. Implement specific tasks identified in the nonpoint source plan to fill gaps in nonpoint source pollution control programs.
67. Prevent, eradicate, or control invasive species and aquatic pests in collaboration with other agencies. Assist communities in developing watershed management plans to address aquatic nuisance species problems in lakes, canals, and estuaries. Issue short-term modifications and/or permits for pesticides use to areas that do not have a management plan.
68. Develop and implement a plan for dam re-licensing (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) permits, 401 certifications, etc.).
69. Implement the Coordinated State Ground Water Protection Program
70. Inspect dairies, issue permits to those with discharges, and take enforcement as needed.

Activities in the First 4 years

71. Integrate water quality objectives and priorities with other programs inside and outside of Ecology.
72. Refine strategy for high priority point source implementation activities (focus on PBTs, regional temperature study, etc.).

Activities in Years 5 through 12

73. Transfer responsibility for management of aquatic pest management to Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA), DNR, DOH, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).
74. Develop a statewide lake management program, including funding strategy.
75. Clarify relationship of ground water and surface water cleanup activities.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Difficulty of balancing priorities of restoration versus preservation of resources.
- Lack of integrating priorities with local government.
- Growth in urban areas and land use changes.
- Relationship of stormwater to TMDLs needs to be defined.
- Headwaters versus Talent Irrigation District court decision.

Objective C: Water quality laws and regulations are fairly and firmly enforced to ensure compliance.

Current Activities

76. Conduct enforcement in priority areas to implement cleanup plans.
77. Conduct enforcement using program guidance.
78. Implement a strategy to collect unpaid penalties.
79. Create clear “fair and firm” escalation policies and actions for enforcement to achieve goals.

Activities in the First 4 Years

80. Revise or update confusing language in permits or permit-like tools to provide clarity and enforceability.
81. Coordinate with other agencies on potential enforcement.
82. Develop enforcement tools for repeat offenders such as denying permits for repeat offenders.
83. Develop new or improved techniques to help achieve compliance, especially where activities or facilities are covered by general permits.
84. Provide public education and involvement related to enforcement issues.
85. Target enforcement activities towards those polluters who refuse available financial or technical assistance and/or do not make the changes necessary to meet water quality standards in order to protect water quality and aquatic resources.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

86. Evaluate our dual roles of technical assistance and enforcement, and attainment of the right mix and separation of these roles (carrot and stick).
87. Coordinate with others conducting resource damage assessments for water quality violations.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Traditional enforcement approaches do not fit well with general permits covering large numbers of facilities and activities.
- Permit denial may require statute or rule changes.

Goal 3: Help communities make sustainable choices that reduce and prevent water quality problems (*support sustainable communities and natural resources*).

Objective A: Ecology promotes the need to protect water quality and aquatic habitat in communities.

Current Activities

88. Conduct municipal treatment plant awards program.
89. Provide technical assistance.
90. Maintain Web site.
91. Provide assistance and support to volunteer monitoring groups.
92. Track success stories and tell communities where they are occurring.
93. Participate in a public involvement strategy including messages to improve understanding of agency missions, mandates, and successes.

Activities in the First 4 years

94. Clearly articulate to communities the extent and severity of current and future water quality problems. Assist communities in identifying long-term and sustainable alternatives.
95. Define the environmental/ecological education role for the water quality program and how it complements local efforts.
96. Encourage community-based projects and adopt-a-stream programs.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

97. Expand school-oriented programs especially focusing on decision-making processes. Provide water quality information from the local area to schools.
98. Expand support for volunteer monitoring efforts.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Limited support for volunteer monitoring.
- Clarity on our role in education is needed.
- Lack of clear vision of our role in promoting sustainability.

Objective B: Ecology helps communities understand how watersheds work, how to assess their condition, and how to use this information to improve and protect water.

Current Activities

99. Base program resources on water quality watershed-based needs and priorities.
100. Assist with basin assessments and provide information for local governments to use in their planning efforts.

Activities in the First 4 Years

101. Develop a useful, credible, and scientifically defensible set of environmental indicators as a water quality performance measure and communicate it to the public and use as a public educational tool.
102. Enlist the support of local resources wherever possible (i.e., 2514 planning units, 2496 groups, and other interest groups for implementing TMDLs).
103. Require basin planning and implementation through Phase I stormwater permits.
104. Promote a holistic approach to addressing watershed issues that considers aquatic habitat, riparian condition, and other logical factors consistent with Growth Management Act (GMA).
105. Provide tools to communities to assist in long range land-use planning
106. Provide available cost/benefit information that decision-makers can understand, including a mechanism to estimate the cost of pollution to society both for the environment and public health.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

107. Require basin planning participation through Phase II stormwater permits.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Not all local governments acknowledge or have the capacity to manage water issues.

Objective C: Ecology helps communities maximize conservation, water reuse, and low impact development in all planning and development.

Current Activities

108. Expand the agricultural BMP work.

109. Evaluate permits.
110. Promote the incentives program.
111. Promote sustainable activities/actions within Ecology.
112. Review engineering reports and facility plans for water reuse.

Activities in the First 4 Years

113. Expand water conservation and water quality improvement as a package deal for agricultural community through the development and implementation of new BMPs.
114. Provide the latest information, including best available science and tools for communities to use in their 2002 GMA updates. Encourage local governments to develop GMA plans that adequately evaluate water quality and aquatic habitat impacts along with water availability and wastewater needs.
115. Analyze GMA compliance status of funding recipients in order to avoid funding growth for entities that are not in compliance with the GMA.
116. Develop a sustainable water initiative with the Water Resources Program and the Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program targeted at communities and large industries.
117. Form and support a work group within the program to identify long-term sustainable approaches to water quality management.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

118. Demonstrate low impact development possibilities and provide long-term funding incentives and information to assist people and communities to implement. Assist local governments to develop low impact ordinances.
119. Implement sustainable water initiative with Water Resources and Shorelands Environmental Assistance programs targeted at communities and large industries.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Complexities of water politics and inter-program coordination.
- Our knowledge of new technologies is limited.

Objective D: The Water Quality Program work is integrated with other programs and agencies to promote sustainable approaches.

Current Activities

120. Continue to participate in the agency sustainability work group.
121. Integrate TMDL public involvement with the 2514 process.

122. Advocate WQ monitoring and assessment activities as part of the budget development process.
123. Coordinate cross-program water quality issues within regional management teams.
124. Coordinate with the Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program and local partners on water quality problems associated with channel disturbances.
125. Assist DOH and local health departments to address water quality problems associated with onsite septic systems.
126. Work cooperatively with other funding agencies through mechanisms such as the Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council to ensure a coordinated and efficient use of funds and “leveraging” of limited monies.
127. Implement the Puget Sound Management Plan.

Activities in the First 4 Years

128. Establish specific communication and coordination links for sustainability with key external agency contacts to facilitate decision-making.
129. Establish periodic joint management team meetings with other water programs to facilitate coordination.
130. Develop the Forest Practices Board Manual and implement the adaptive management process.
131. Evaluate existing fund management processes to be a broader partnership with other water programs.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

132. Investigate other models for coordinated decision-making to address local issues.
133. Determine if plans prevent water quality and aquatic habitat problems and consider water availability.

Public Service Goals

Goal 1: Provide water quality partners with technical assistance, financial support, and superior customer service.

Objective A: Technical assistance to prevent and clean up pollution is provided to our customers through partnerships with all clients and other interested parties.

Current Activities

134. Provide watershed level technical assistance to local governments for stormwater management.
135. Develop technical assistance and guidance that is user friendly.
136. Establish collaborative technical assistance relationships with partners and realign existing resources to take advantage of efficiencies.
137. Provide technical assistance on cost-effective treatment alternatives to small communities.

Activities in the First 4 Years

138. Support Environmental Assessment Program to provide data monitoring and quality assurance/control training to clients and other interested parties.
139. Update Orange Book to include an addendum regarding small community assistance (STEP).
140. Identify partnerships and do an assessment to determine kind and level of assistance required.
141. Assess resources needed to provide 50 percent of technical assistance including necessary tools and training.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

142. Provide at least 50 percent of the technical assistance needed to all clients and stakeholders.
143. Develop a statewide expertise database to enhance or supplement Ecology's technical assistance capability.
144. Evaluate the benefits of putting more water quality staff closer to local governments and citizens (e.g., co-locate with local government).
145. Develop technical assistance and guidance that is multi-lingual.

Objective B: Provide water quality partners with financial assistance.

Current Activities

146. Use objective ranking criteria to identify highest priority environmental and public health needs for communities with the least ability to fund.
147. Structure grant and loan agreements to contain measurable environmental outputs.
148. Incorporate the funding recommendations of local groups through a local priority-setting process.
149. Evaluate interest rates and terms annually to be able to offer the lowest rates that still insure the perpetuity of the State Revolving Loan Fund.

Activities in the First 4 Years

150. Develop meaningful and measurable environmental outcome measures to ascertain the success and return on the public's investment of targeting limited grant and loan funds on a project, watershed, and statewide basis.
151. Develop a database to track outcome measures.

Objective C: Treat our clients professionally.

Current Activities

152. Implement Ecology's Code of Conduct.
153. Look for and implement regulatory streamlining opportunities.
154. Use the "Plain Talk" approach when writing to our clients by removing unnecessary and bureaucratic language.

Goal 2: Provide useful information for the public, partners, and agency and involve stakeholders in decision making.

Objective A: High quality educational resources are accessible to all.

Current Activities

- 155. Provide education links on the Web page.
- 156. Support Water Education for Teachers (WET).
- 157. Provide early and on-going information to the news media.

Activities in the First 4 Years

- 158. Enhance use of World Wide Web for education.
- 159. Research existing and make available K-12 curriculum for public schools on the basics of clean water and adopt relevant and useful models for use in the state of Washington. This curriculum should be in several languages that reflect the cultural diversity of the state.
- 160. Develop and present in conjunction with the Washington State Department of Health a multi-generational curriculum for diverse communities on the basics of clean water.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

Challenges/Obstacles

- Need diverse staff to provide resources to diverse communities.

Objective B: Sufficient environmental information is collected, evaluated, and readily available to help make informed decisions and the public is involved in decision making.

Current Activities

- 161. Maintain and update Water Quality Permit Life Cycle System (WPLCS) database.
- 162. Maintain and update 303(d) database.
- 163. Continue supporting the ambient monitoring program.
- 164. Update the TMDL database.
- 165. Involve citizens in water quality decision making in order to make informed decisions.

Activities in the First 4 Years

166. Integrate 303(d) list with 305(b) report (reference EPA Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (CALM)).
167. Integrate monitoring programs with 303(d) and 305(b) assessment programs.
168. Support an adequate statewide water quality monitoring program and coordinated monitoring council.
169. Implement the environmental justice checklist into the programs.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

170. Define data that would be needed for pollution loading calculations in order to show the amount of pollution entering water.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Need to agree on indicators to be measured.
- 303(d) and 305(b) assessment programs not organizationally aligned with monitoring programs.

Objective C: Water quality databases are standardized, integrated, effective, and accessible.

Current Activities

171. Capture loan and grant data in environmental information and monitoring system.

Activities in the First 4 Years

172. Develop an information technology strategy for water quality.
173. Provide guidance and Web accessible information on cost effective and sustainable practices.
174. Develop a success stories database on the Web.
175. Support operation and dissemination of data housed at University of Washington (UW) volunteer data bank.
176. Make all data and information collected on water quality available in a Web-based geographic application to staff and the public.
177. Identify information technology strategy's requirements. Design and/or modify systems. Include the use of Web-site technology.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Data systems have evolved for specific purposes and are not integrated.
- There is no centralized strategy for information technology within the agency.

Goal 3: Support all staff so that we can be successful as an organization and as individuals.

Objective A: Staff are treated as professionals and work cooperatively and as a team.

Current Activities

- 178. Provide training on a wide variety of job-related topics.
- 179. Conduct annual evaluations.
- 180. Provide representatives to the Forum.

Activities in the First 4 Years

- 181. Staff are trained in teamwork for achieving successful results.
- 182. Develop essential functions for each program position.
- 183. Establish core training for all water quality staff that addresses critical program needs.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

- 184. Evaluate the program's use of teams.
- 185. Respond to the evaluation of teamwork.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Some staff perceive their job as being undervalued.
- Insufficient training blocks the efficient transfer of skills and abilities.
- Lack of clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Objective B: All staff are provided with a safe and supportive work environment.

Current Activities

- 186. Implement recently revised safety plan.
- 187. Work with building services and facilities to develop plans and strategies to ensure the work environment is safe.
- 188. Provide training to all staff related to first aid, violence in the workplace, and disaster preparedness.

Activities in the First 4 Years

189. Implement plans and strategies to ensure the work environment is safe.
190. Update the program safety plan.

Objective C: All staff recognize and value each individual's unique qualifications and perspectives and value the diverse communities we serve.

Current Activities

191. Develop, jointly between supervisors and staff, individual development plans that are specific and customized to meet the existing and future training and career needs of the individual. Provide feedback as part of the annual evaluation process.
192. Provide education and training opportunities to improve and enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities that will allow staff to meet existing duties and future needs of the program workforce within the training budget.
193. Participate in development of diversity implementation plan that will help the program reflect the diversity of the clients served and meets the future needs of the program, including recruitment and retention.

Activities in the First 4 Years

194. Train all staff in the benefits of diversity.
195. Assign work groups using a diverse mixture of staff and various levels of expertise.
196. Endorse and reward quality improvement efforts.
197. Provide the opportunity for staff to temporarily trade jobs with others in the agency, other agencies, or the private sector. Provide the opportunity for staff to participate in developmental assignments.
198. Provide regular feedback to employees.
199. Review hiring practices to implement diversity implementation plan.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Perception that taking a job rotation or developmental assignment might result in an undesirable transfer or reduction-in-force when the rotation or developmental assignment ends.
- Limited success at recruiting and retaining diverse employees.

Objective D: Workforce reflects the strategic plan of the program.

Current Activities

200. Review the knowledge, skills, abilities, and tools required on an on-going basis to meet current and future workforce needs.
201. Implement a systematic process to identify program training needs.
202. Establish process for identifying the equipment and resources needed by the workforce to meet the needs of current and future duties and responsibilities.
203. Survey staff on an annual basis to determine if training needs are met.
204. Establish budget process so that workforce needs are a priority.

Activities in the First 4 Years

205. Hire qualified individuals and retain experienced staff.
206. Equip and train staff with what they need.
207. Integrate training into the program biennial budget.

Objective E: The program is managed to be efficient, effective, and fiscally responsible.

Current Activities

208. Manage the capital and operating budgets within the appropriated levels from the Legislature.
209. Maintain flexibility within the budget to meet emerging or unanticipated needs during the biennium.
210. Update permit fee rule biennially and incorporate new categories.
211. Prepare and report on program plans and performance measures.
212. Administer the State Revolving Loan Fund program.
213. Prepare legislatively mandated reports.

Activities in the First 4 Years

214. Develop options for a fair and equitable wastewater discharge permit fee program for Phase II Municipal Stormwater Dischargers and aquatic pesticides permits.
215. Develop options for a long-term source of operating funds for administering the State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan program after the federal capitalization period ends.
216. Develop a strategy to inform and educate legislative staff and Office of Financial Management (OFM) Staff on the need for a long-term solution for administration funds to ensure the SRF is managed effectively and efficiently in perpetuity.

Activities in Years 5 through 12

217. Adjust permit fees to sustain the permit fee program for each sector.
218. Implement the preferred alternative or option supported by the Legislature and OFM for generating adequate operating revenue for administering the SRF loan program after the federal capitalization period ends.

Challenges/Obstacles

- Budget constraints on dedicated funds and their uses.
- Obtaining agreement on restructuring of fees.