

## What is the concern?

Every year, the Washington Department of Ecology conducts inspections of construction sites. The purpose is to assess actual or potential water quality effects to adjacent water, including underground water. These inspections also assess whether the permit holder is implementing the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan required for each construction site.

## Why is it important to prevent stormwater runoff?

Potential for erosion exists wherever land-clearing activities take place. The soils, weather, and geography of eastern Washington can cause significant problems when combined with construction activities. The primary water pollutants associated with construction sites are sediments and turbidity resulting from erosion. This muddy water clogs streams and takes away options for beneficial industrial, agricultural, and recreational uses. The pollution must be prevented when working the soil.

## The Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan

The main component or “cornerstone” of the stormwater permit for construction activities is the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).

An important component of the SWPPP is an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan. This plan includes a description of best management practices (BMPs) that will be used to identify,



reduce, eliminate, or prevent sediment and erosion problems at the construction site.

The importance of the *early* construction of BMPs cannot be over-emphasized. Proper BMP construction is impossible once snow falls or the ground freezes. In the warmer portions of eastern Washington, you need to have your BMPs constructed before winter and spring storms occur. Sequencing ground-clearing only as needed and delaying ground-clearing until after the rainy season, when possible, is a BMP that protects water quality with minimal cost.

The SWPPP is a changeable document that can be modified to reflect physical improvements at your site. Ecology encourages you to continually adapt your SWPPPs to prevent dirty/turbid-water discharges to Washington’s waters.

## Common problems observed on construction sites

- ❖ Not having an SWPPP
- ❖ Not carrying out the SWPPP
- ❖ Exposed soil throughout the site
- ❖ Stockpiled materials uncovered
- ❖ Not inspecting and maintaining BMPs

- ❖ Not notifying Ecology of non-compliant discharges
- ❖ Stormwater coming off site
- ❖ Improper silt-fence installation, placement, and maintenance
- ❖ Sediment ponds/traps not functional before activities occur that disturb land
- ❖ Tracking mud onto public access roads
- ❖ Not preventing off-site drainage from entering the construction site
- ❖ No cover/containment of petroleum fuel containers

This is *not* an exhaustive list; specific requirements depend upon your site.

## Laws and permit conditions related to construction sites

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW), Washington Administrative Code (WAC), and the National Pollution Discharge Elimination Permit (NPDES) conditions listed below are evaluated by the Department of Ecology to ensure compliance with the construction permit at your facility. You should be familiar with these terms.

- ❖ Discharge of polluting matter in waters (*is*) prohibited. Pollutants are defined as: dirt, oil, grease, concrete slurry, etc. **RCW 90.48.080**
- ❖ Turbidity shall not exceed 5 NTU\* over background turbidity when the background turbidity is 50 NTU or less, or have more than a 10 percent increase in turbidity when the background turbidity is more than 50 NTU. Turbidity is the legal measurement of

dirty water in Washington. (\**NTU is a standard to measure the clarity of water, literally: Nephelometric Turbidity Unit*)  
**WAC 173-201A-030** (1) (vi)

You'll find these conditions required in the permit issued by Ecology:

- ❖ The Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, a major component of the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), must be put in place to minimize erosion and the transport of sediments. **Permit Condition S9.C1**
- ❖ A permit holder must retain the SWPPP on site or within reasonable access to the site and make it available upon request to Ecology. **Permit Condition S9.B.3**
- ❖ All exposed and unworked soils must be stabilized by suitable and timely application of BMPs. **Permit Condition S9.C.1a (i)**
- ❖ Wherever construction vehicle access routes intersect paved roads, provisions must be made to minimize the transport of sediment (mud) onto the paved road. **Permit Condition S9.C.1a (vi)**
- ❖ Notify Ecology within 24 hours if there is a non-compliance discharge or other type of non-compliance. **Permit Condition G3**

## What can the permit holder do before wet weather season?

Ecology requires you to compare your current SWPPP to actual conditions of the site before the wet weather season begins. According to

Ecology's *Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington*, the wet weather season occurs from **October 1 to June 30**. It is crucial that proper erosion and sediment control BMPs are put in place *before* storm events or winter shutdown.

## Let's keep clean storm water separated from dirty storm water

**Preventative** maintenance is the solution! Using berms, pipes, conveyance channels or other structural BMPs, clean water should be routed around areas of exposed soil and settling ponds. Give yourself a break and don't treat more water than you have to. **Remember, clean water going into a turbid pond = more turbid water!**

## Contacts and information for Ecology inspectors, by county

- ◆ Adams, Asotin, Columbia, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, and Whitman counties contact **Dave Duncan** at 509-329-3554
- ◆ Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, and Yakima counties contact **Ray Latham** at 509-575-2807 or **Terry Wittmeier** at 509-574-3991

*If you need this information in an alternate format, please contact us at 360-407-6404. If you are a person with a speech or hearing impairment, call 711 or 800-833-6388 for TTY.*

# Preparing for Winter at Construction Projects in Eastern Washington



## Permit Holder's Guide

