



Focus on East Fork Lewis River

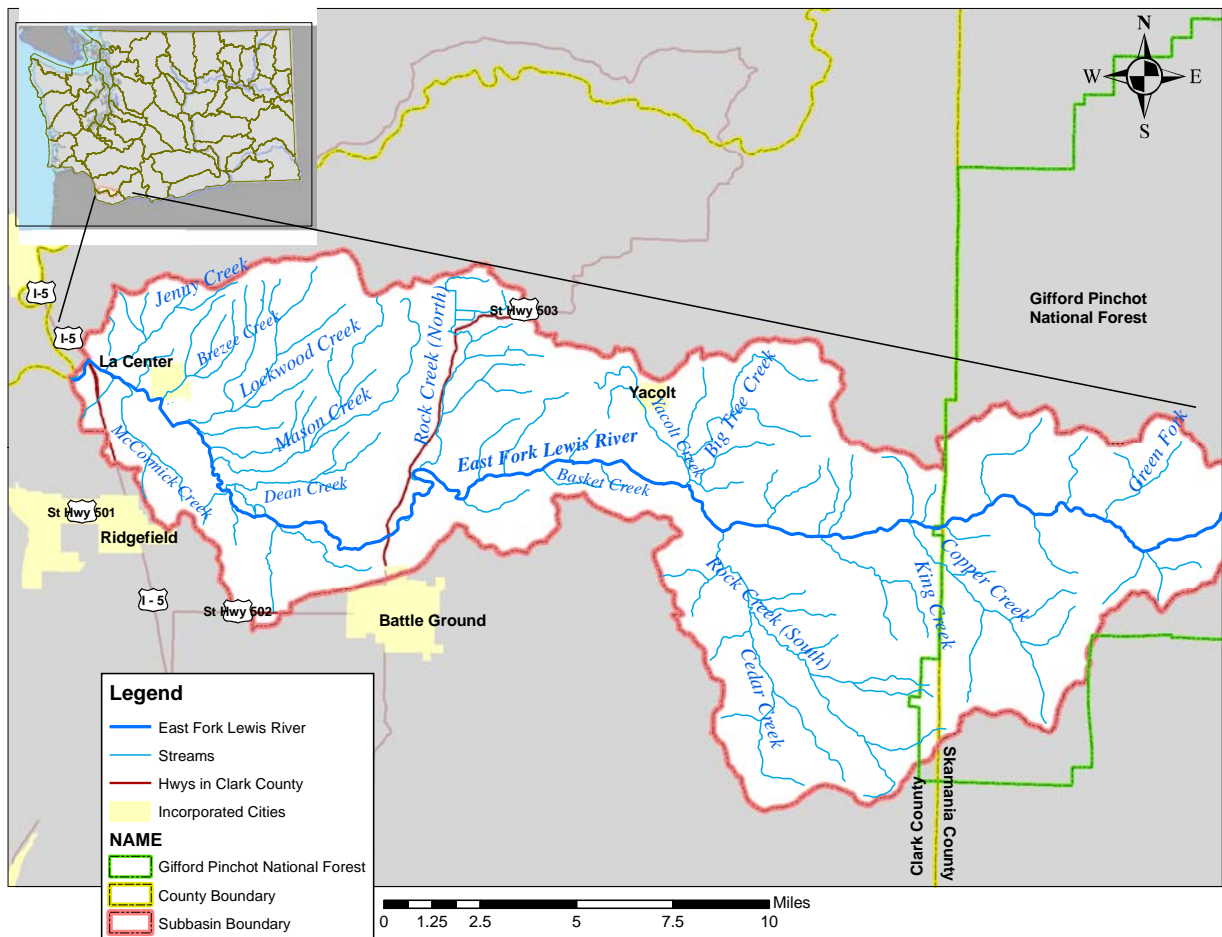
from Ecology's Environmental Assessment and Water Quality Programs

Water Cleanup Planning in the East Fork Lewis Watershed

The East Fork Lewis River flows from the Cascade Mountains to its confluence with the North Fork Lewis, west of La Center. Approximately three miles farther west, the Lewis River flows into the Columbia River.

The East Fork Lewis River watershed offers an abundance of beauty and water-related activities. Unfortunately, the quality of water in some areas of the river is below state standards. The East Fork Lewis has been identified for study and cleanup because of high fecal coliform bacteria numbers and high water temperature.

High levels of fecal coliform bacteria increase risks to people swimming, wading, or fishing, and high temperatures create poor conditions for fish and other wildlife.



What's being done to address this?



The East Fork Lewis River is under pressure from growth, resulting in many small, uncontrolled sources of pollution entering the river. In order to return the East Fork Lewis to a healthy condition, a coordinated process has begun that will result in what's called a *total maximum daily load (TMDL)* or *water cleanup plan*. The process, described in the federal Clean Water Act, will be used to reduce harmful bacteria and lower water temperatures in the river.

The first step in the TMDL process is a water quality study to figure out how much existing pollution needs to be reduced to keep the water healthy. The study also identifies main sources or the location of sources of pollution.

Who is involved in the process?

The Clean Water Act requires states to clean up water bodies that don't meet water quality standards. In Washington, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) has that responsibility. But, we don't do it alone.

The East Fork Lewis River subbasin has been extensively studied by many groups because of its importance for fish resources and its high potential for salmon recovery. Current data are analyzed to figure out what questions still need to be answered.

While Ecology will coordinate the study and cleanup planning process, many other agencies and individuals are helping. They will help with the study, serve on the advisory committee, participate in planning, and conduct or oversee cleanup activities.

What's next?

Ecology field crews will begin sampling in the watershed in May 2005. Sampling will be ongoing through September 2006 in order to study conditions in a variety of seasons. Data analysis and computer modeling will take place in late 2006. In 2007, local agencies and individuals will work with Ecology to identify cleanup activities and prepare for public comments on the water cleanup plan.

For updates on the water cleanup plan/TMDL process or to get involved, contact Dave Howard at 360-690-4796 or e-mail dhow461@ecy.wa.gov.



If you need this publication in an alternate format, please contact us at 306-407-6404 or TTY (for the speech and hearing impaired) at 711 or 1-800-833-6388.