



Focus on Reclaimed Water Use



Because our economy and quality of life depend on high quality water supplies, Washington State implemented the Reclaimed Water Use Act in 1992. Reclaimed water is a water supply created from highly treated wastewater.

Reclaimed water use:

- Reduces demands for more water resources.
- Saves drinking water supplies by using reclaimed water for other uses such as irrigation and toilet flushing.
- Allows more water to stay in rivers and streams for fish, wildlife, and recreational uses.

Rule development

As the reclaimed water program grows, new projects propose new treatment methods and creative uses. To meet these needs, the 2006 legislature directed the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to develop rules on all aspects of reclaimed water use by December 31, 2010. The new law also directs Ecology to:

- Coordinate with the Department of Health.
- Form a stakeholder advisory committee.
- Provide status reports in 2008 and 2009.

Ecology conducted the initial advisory committee meetings in October and November of 2006.

Program status

Washington State law requires all municipal wastewater treatment facilities to consider reclaimed water use during planning. Reclaimed water projects are high-level treatment facilities that can require several years to plan, design, and build. The Departments of Ecology and Health jointly administer the program. They have developed guidance and provided technical assistance to more than 75 proposed projects. As of December 2006, 19 reclaimed water facilities operate in Washington and range in size from one thousand gallons to 7 million gallons per day. Together, they produce a total of about 24 million gallons of reclaimed water each day.

Future direction

The successful implementation of reclaimed water use requires state leadership and infrastructure funding support. This is especially important in:

- Water-short areas where reclaimed water can supplement or replace other water sources.
- Sensitive water quality areas where reclaimed water use can protect or restore complex water systems such as Puget Sound.

For most projects, the cost of reclaimed water treatment and distribution is significantly higher than current costs for conventional wastewater treatment and discharge. To get customers to switch to reclaimed water, most utilities charge a water supply rate lower than potable water. Utilities often find it difficult to support a rate increase to cover these additional costs. State funding support would help them invest in reclaimed water use to meet our future water needs.

For more information:

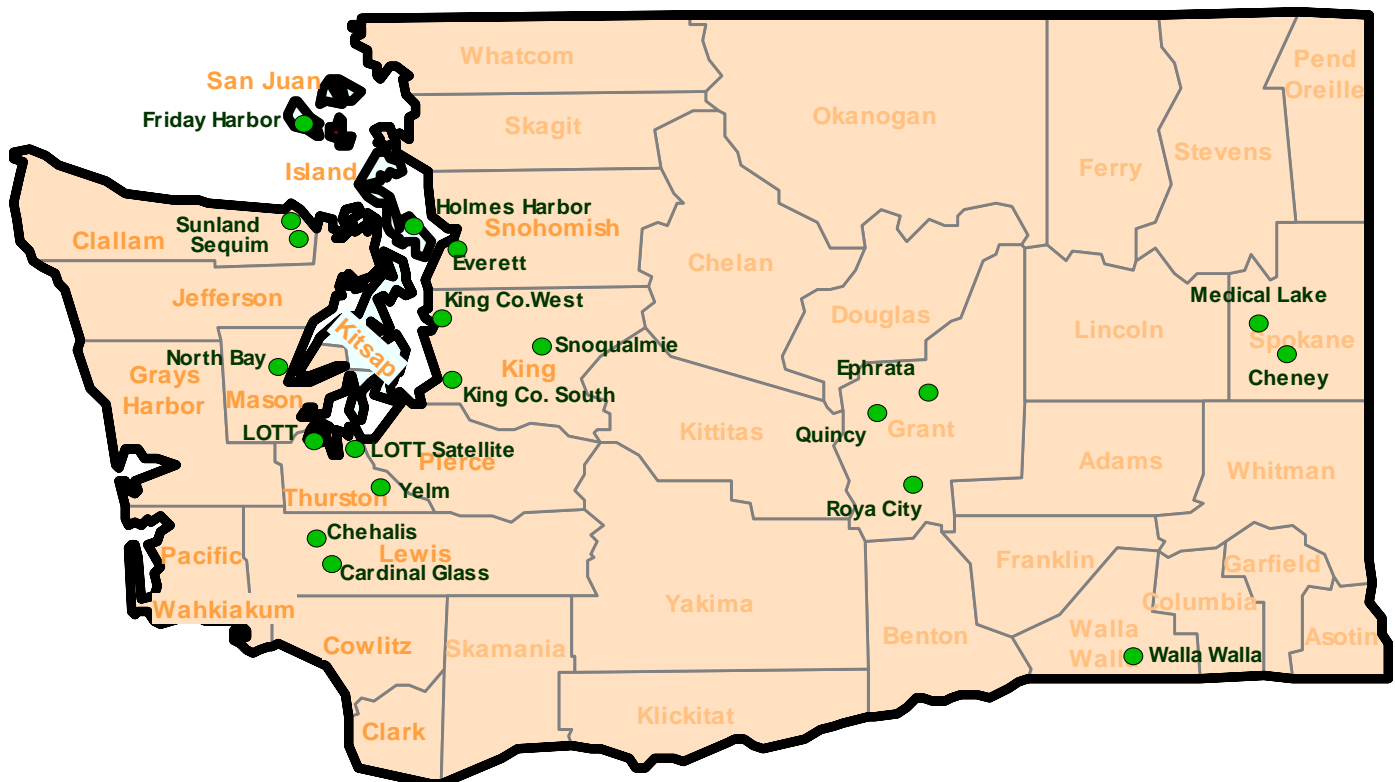
Ecology's Web site, <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/reclaim/index.html>, includes information on reclaimed water use and the rule development. The site provides answers to frequently asked questions and 15 case studies focused on reclaimed water projects in Washington.

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Map of Facilities



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