



# Focus on Washington's Water Quality Assessment

from Ecology's Water Quality Program, Watershed Management Section

## What is Washington's Water Quality Assessment?

The department of Ecology has compiled and assessed available water quality data on a statewide basis in order to get a better picture of the overall status of water quality in Washington's waters. The results of the assessment are submitted to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an "integrated report" to satisfy federal Clean Water Act requirements of sections 303(d) and 305(b). The assessment includes the list of known polluted waters in the state, sometimes referred to as the 303(d) list.

## Overview of the assessment process

Developing the Water Quality Assessment has been a multi-year process that has involved numerous opportunities for public input. Ecology started by updating the department's policy for placing waters in various water quality categories in September 2002, conducting a public call for data in the fall of 2002, and then conducting a public review on the preliminary results of the assessment from January – March 2004. After making further changes to the assessment based on comments and new data received, Ecology held a second public review from November 3 – December 17, 2004.

## What are the results of the public review process?

Overall, Ecology received 316 comments, letters, or emails that included over 2000 specific suggestions or comments on the waterbody listings. Ecology compiled its own water quality data for the assessment and invited other groups to submit data as well. Nearly 40,000 pieces of data were analyzed to ensure they were collected using sound scientific methods. Less than 3,000 were analyzed in 1998. All data pieces were then mapped and catalogued. Out of all the data, there will be 2,482 listings for impaired water.

## What happens now?

Ecology submitted Washington's Water Quality Assessment to EPA on June 2, 2005, as an "integrated report" to meet the Clean Water Act requirements of sections 305(b) and 303(d). This assessment includes the candidate 303(d) list of impaired waters for 2004. EPA will take action only on the 303(d) list, which is expected by mid-summer 2005. Each of the water bodies on the 303(d) list will need to develop water cleanup plans also known as a total maximum daily loads or TMDLs. A TMDL identifies how much pollution needs to be reduced or eliminated to achieve clean water.

## How can the public view the Water Quality Assessment?

The assessment can be viewed at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/index.html>

## How do I learn more?

Contact Ken Koch at 360-407-6782, or visit our Web site.

*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.*