

Palouse River Watershed

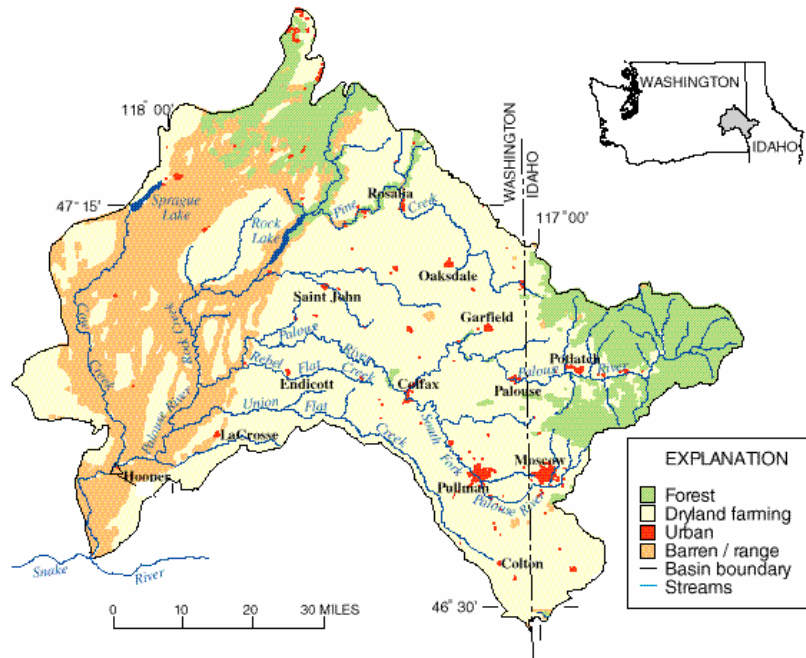


Watershed Statistics:

- Total drainage area: 3,300 square miles
- 83% of the basin is in Washington State
- Headwaters: Forested mountains of Idaho
- Dryland agriculture: 67%
- Rangeland: 26%
- Forested areas: 6%
- Urban areas: less than 1%

Major Tributaries to the Palouse River:

- South Fork Palouse River
- Union Flat Creek
- Rebel Flat Creek
- Cow Creek
- Rock Creek



Water Quality Issues in the Palouse Watershed

Several streams in the Palouse Watershed currently do not meet water quality standards. Water quality standards are intended to protect water for beneficial uses, such as swimming, fishing and drinking water.

The streams are impaired by several different pollutants. Some streams have unhealthy levels of chemicals that are no longer used, such as pesticides and PCBs. Others have high temperatures or low dissolved oxygen levels or pH problems that do not protect aquatic life. Some have high levels of bacteria which can indicate the presence of fecal matter and disease causing organisms which can make people sick when swimming, boating or fishing.

Water quality monitoring indicates the following problems:

Palouse River (North Fork and mainstem): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolved oxygen • Fecal coliform bacteria • pH • temperature • historical pesticides • PCBs 	South Fork Palouse River: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolved oxygen • Fecal coliform bacteria • pH • Temperature 	Paradise Creek: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolved oxygen • Fecal coliform bacteria • Amonia
Missouri Flat Creek: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fecal coliform bacteria 	Rebel Flat Creek: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolved oxygen • Fecal coliform bacteria 	Cow Creek: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolved oxygen • Fecal coliform bacteria • Temperature
Pleasant Valley Creek: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fecal coliform bacteria • pH 	Other major tributaries of concern include Union Flat Creek, Rock Creek, and Pine Creek.	

What is being done to address these problems?

The good news is that a lot of work is already addressing these water quality issues.

- The Palouse Conservation District has been restoring riparian areas along several streams.
- The Whitman Conservation District has educated school children about the importance riparian areas and water quality.
- A Water Quality Plan (TMDL) for fecal coliform bacteria in the North Fork Palouse River was completed and approved by EPA in March 2005.
- The Pacific Northwest Direct Seed Association has continued to promote the practice of direct seeding which does not disturb the soil as much as historical methods so less dirt ends up in the air and water.
- The South Fork Palouse River Watershed Committee and the Palouse Conservation District developed the South Fork River Watershed Characterization and Implementation Plan (2002).
- Many agricultural operations have adopted practices that prevent or reduce their impact to streams.
- And much more by other organizations and individuals!



John Aeschliman, the Pacific NW Direct Seed Association's president, accepting an Environmental Excellence Award from Rene' Marc Mangin, Eastern Regional Director of the Department of Ecology.

Because the streams are still impaired Ecology is required to develop a Water Quality Improvement Plan (also known as a Total Maximum Daily Load).

A Water Quality Improvement Plan is a public process to develop a plan for clean water. For more information please see *Water Quality Improvement Projects – What should I know & what does it mean to me?* (Publication #05-10-100) or visit <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/index.html>.

The process in the Palouse Watershed will be conducted in several phases.

- During the first phase Ecology will be addressing the water quality impairments for the historical pesticides and PCBs. This work began in spring 2005.
- In 2006 Ecology will begin examining temperature, dissolved oxygen, fecal coliform, pH and nutrients in the South Fork Palouse River.
- The other problems in the watershed will be addressed in the future.

How do I learn more?

For more information about the process or the work happening in the watershed, please visit the website below or contact your TMDL Specialist. You can also join the mailing list for this process.

Contact Information:

Website	http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/tmdl/palouse/index.html
TMDL Specialist	Elaine Snouwaert 509-329-3503 Email: esno461@ecy.wa.gov
Palouse Watershed Planning Unit	Rob Buchert, Palouse Conservation District 509-332-4101 http://www.palousecd.org/pages/programs.asp?PageTextID=22

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