



Focus on **Whatcom Creek**

from Ecology's Bellingham Field Office

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Whatcom Creek Fecal Coliform Total Maximum Daily Load - Water Quality Improvement Report

SEND WRITTEN COMMENTS ON THE TMDL REPORT TO:

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INFORMATION REPOSITORIES

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1204 Railroad Ave
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<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0610041.html>

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Background

Located in the city of Bellingham, Whatcom Creek stretches 4.3 miles from Lake Whatcom to Bellingham Bay. Running through the city center, Whatcom Creek and its four tributaries (Hanna, Cemetery, Fever, and Lincoln Creeks) stream through residential, commercial, and light industrial lands as well as parks and open space.

Water Quality problems in Whatcom Creek

The water quality of Whatcom Creek does not currently meet state standards for fecal coliform bacteria.

Fecal coliform are a group of bacteria found in the feces of warm-blooded animals such as people, livestock, pets, and wildlife. The amount of fecal coliform in a stream increases with the amount of sewage waste and/or manure in the water.

The higher the fecal coliform bacteria count the greater the likelihood that illness-causing viruses, called pathogens, are present in the water. People swimming or playing in water can be exposed to pathogens which can enter the body through small cuts, abrasions, or mucus membranes.

There is no single source of pollution to Whatcom Creek and its tributaries. It comes from failing sewer systems, illegal sewer connections, pet waste not being disposed of properly, stormwater running off roads, and from sediment that runs off construction sites.

What happens because of poor water quality?

Clean, cool water is important for people, wildlife, and the local economy. A dirty creek can be a health threat to people who live, play, and work near or on the creek. Fish have trouble surviving and spawning in a bacteria laden creek. If left unchecked, this problem could decrease property values.

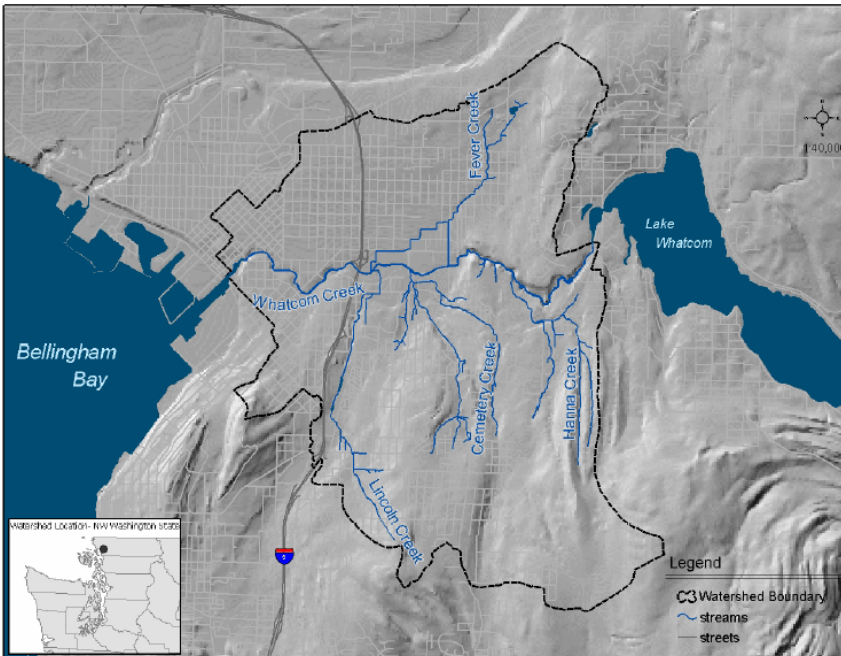
Developing a cleanup plan

The federal Clean Water Act mandates that states establish a water cleanup plan for surface waters that do not meet water quality standards. When a lake, river, or stream fails to meet these standards, the act requires the state to prepare a water cleanup plan called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The goal of a TMDL is to ensure polluted waters meet water quality standards.

To address the high levels of fecal coliform, Ecology has created a cleanup plan for Whatcom Creek. Ecology seeks public comment on the Whatcom Creek Fecal Coliform TMDL Water Quality Improvement Report (WQIR). ***The WQIR outlines how much pollution must be reduced in order to meet clean water standards.***



The Whatcom Creek TMDL Study, which outlines how much pollution exists in Whatcom Creek and its tributaries, was published in August 2004 (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0403015.html>).



Cleaning up Whatcom Creek

Many small actions produce the pollution affecting the Whatcom Creek watershed, and it will take many small actions by those who live and work in the Whatcom watershed to clean up the streams. According to the technical study, a 58-to-88 percent reduction in pollution will be required for Whatcom Creek to meet state water quality standards.

Here are just a few of the actions that can help clean up Whatcom Creek: Picking up pet waste and disposing of it properly makes a significant impact. Identifying and fixing broken sewer systems and pipes will prevent human waste from entering the stream. People who see something unusual in the creek should call the City of Bellingham

immediately. Such actions, taken by many individuals, will add up and make a difference.

How you can get involved

Ecology is seeking comment on the Whatcom Creek TMDL WQIR. It is available at the Washington State Department of Ecology, Bellingham Field Office, 1204 Railroad Ave, Suite 200, Bellingham, and on Ecology's website at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0610041.html>.

The public comment period runs from October 2, 2006 through November 2, 2006. Comments can be sent to Steve Hood, Department of Ecology, 1204 Railroad Ave, Suite 200, Bellingham, WA, 98225, or via email to shoo461@ecy.wa.gov.

What happens next?

Once the WQIR is approved, a water quality improvement plan (WQIP) will be issued outlining actions that will be taken to reduce the number of pollutants entering Whatcom Creek and its tributaries. Ecology will seek public comment on this plan, too.

For more information

Contact: Steve Hood at Ecology's Bellingham Field Office, 360-738-6250, shoo461@ecy.wa.gov

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