



Focus on **Stormwater Funding**

The problem

Virtually all of our urban creeks, streams, and rivers are harmed by stormwater pollution. Stormwater is the leading contributor to water quality pollution of urban waterways in Washington.

In general, untreated stormwater is not safe for people to drink and is not recommended for swimming. It can contain toxic metals, organic compounds, bacteria, and viruses. Polluted stormwater can close beaches for swimming and clam digging. Stormwater can also trigger toxic algae blooms.

Under the federal Clean Water Act, local governments are required to have discharge permits for their storm drain systems. These permits have been required for Clark, King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties and the cities of Seattle and Tacoma for more than ten years. Under recent EPA rules, an additional 101 cities and 13 counties across the state are required for the first time to have permits for their storm drain systems. EPA delegates these rules to the states to administer.

In January 2007, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) issued three municipal stormwater permits. These municipal stormwater permits require local governments develop and implement stormwater management programs to control stormwater discharges into their storm sewer systems. A stormwater management program is a plan to reduce the discharge of pollutants, reduce impacts to receiving waters, eliminate illegal discharges, meet surface water, ground water and sediment standards.

Although the permit requirements are phased in over the next five years, Ecology recognizes that complying with the permits will be difficult and expensive for local governments.

Washington has a two-fold strategy to manage and control harmful stormwater. The first strategy is to fix existing problems associated with urban stormwater runoff. The second is putting local stormwater management programs in place to prevent new stormwater problems as urban areas grow.

The solution

Local governments have made significant investments in controlling and properly managing stormwater runoff; however, considerably more needs to be done to protect and restore our urban waters. Municipalities need funding as well as a willingness to begin fixing existing urban stormwater problems and to develop and implement stormwater management programs to prevent future stormwater problems. As a result, Washington residents will enjoy improved water quality in and near their neighborhoods. Also, there will be less long-term damage to streams and less long-term damage to public and private property. Preventing these damages brings long-term cost savings to taxpaying citizens.

Funding and information will help local governments get started. The state is providing workshops for this newly regulated municipalities starting in March and has an existing and proposed plan to help local governments offset costs to come into compliance with the new stormwater permits.

Washington's current investment to fight stormwater

The current biennial budget appropriated by the 2005 Legislature reflects a significant initial investment to assist local programs in meeting requirements of the new Phase II stormwater permits. The state is currently allocating \$2.7 million in grants to 33 jurisdictions, plus \$300,000 to Mason County for stormwater-related projects. This funding comes from the state's Local Toxics Control Account, which is created through a tax on hazardous substances sold in the state.

Activities in projects eligible for this grant assistance involve:

- Public education, information, and communication.
- Establishing and refining stormwater utilities (including stable rate structures, developing stormwater ordinances and regulations, and other capacity-building activities to facilitate ongoing stormwater management needs).
- Mapping and geographic information system of stormwater sources.
- Reviewing existing and model stormwater regulations.
- Conducting inventories of stormwater sources.
- Source-control activities, such as erosion control projects involving plantings and drain stenciling.
- Completing detailed plans, such as general stormwater management plans, and facilities plans (including financing options and choices) to meet the Phase II Stormwater Management NPDES Permit.

Ecology awarded grants in priority to jurisdictions based on median household income, percent of sales and property tax per capita, population and unemployment. Not all communities that applied for the grants received grants. The list of municipalities eligible for a \$75,000 grant, or to share grants with a partner municipality:

Asotin, Asotin County, Clarkston, East Wenatchee, Douglas County, Kelso, Centralia, Sunnyside, Selah, Ellensburg, Sedro-Woolley, Ferndale, Port Orchard, Pullman, Lakewood, Cowlitz County, Aberdeen, Pasco, Walla Walla, Walla Walla County, Spokane Valley, Battle Ground, Washougal, Port Angeles, Oak Harbor, Yakima, West Richland, Union Gap, Mount Vernon, Longview, Vancouver, Buckley and Orting.

Low impact development grants currently being awarded

In addition, Ecology is currently awarding \$2.5 million to 10 local governments in a pilot Low Impact Development Stormwater Management Grants Program. The 2006 Legislature authorized and appropriated these funds through its supplemental budget for the state and is an integral part of the Governor's Puget Sound Initiative.

The program will provide grants to local governments in the Puget Sound Basin to help them meet critical stormwater management needs to protect and restore water quality. The grants will fund innovative, low impact development (LID) stormwater management projects. Examples of LID projects include permeable pavement, bioretention swales, slopes or cells, rain gardens, vegetated roofs and reverse-slope sidewalk rainwater harvest projects.

Grant recipients include Port Angeles, Poulsbo, Issaquah, Olympia, Snohomish County, Redmond, Kitsap County Consolidated Housing Authority, Bremerton, King County and Bainbridge Island School District #303.

Washington's proposed investment to fight stormwater

To keep Washington's investment strong to protect water quality, Governor Gregoire is seeking \$26.17 million in the 2007-2009 budget to help local government fight stormwater pollution. The Governor proposes to spend \$17 million from the State Toxics Control Account and \$9.17 million coming from the State Building Construction Account. The State Toxics Control Account is funded by a tax on hazardous substances, recovered remedial actions and penalties collected. The State Building Construction Account consists of state bonds that sold and repaid over a long period of time. The fund helps pay for construction of water pollution control treatment facilities.

Of the \$26.17 million, \$9 million dollars would be provided as grants to local governments to assist them in developing and implementing stormwater management programs which are required by the new EPA rules. Of that \$9 million, \$7 million would go to Puget Sound projects and \$2 million to non-Puget Sound projects. Some of the new requirements include:

- Develop and implement a public education and outreach program to educate citizens, businesses, developers and planners on how to avoid creating stormwater problems and on proper stormwater management techniques.
- Adopt and enforce an ordinance prohibiting non-stormwater discharges into their storm drain system. Document and map storm drain system. Identification and elimination of non-stormwater discharges into the storm drain system.
- Adopt and enforce an ordinance to control stormwater runoff from construction sites. Inspect construction sites to ensure that stormwater controls are in place.
- Adopt and enforce an ordinance for stormwater runoff from new development and re-development. Review stormwater site plans to ensure that the proper post construction stormwater controls are being proposed, inspect completed development sites to ensure that proper stormwater controls are in place.
- Properly operate and maintain existing best stormwater management practices for new construction.

The remainder (\$17.17 million) would be provided as grants to local governments to fund stormwater retrofit projects and to meet critical stormwater retrofit needs to protect and restore water quality. Stormwater retrofit projects include:

- Identification and correction of areas where high stormwater flows are causing flooding or contributing to unstable stream channels.
- Retro-fitting storm drain systems to incorporate flow control and/or stormwater treatment to remove toxic pollutants. Funding of local, innovative stormwater treatment or flow control practices including stormwater projects that implement low impact development techniques.

Governor's 07-09 Budget Assistance to Local Governments for Stormwater		
Item	Amount	Fund Source
Municipal Stormwater Programs: Puget Sound	\$7 million	Local Toxics Control Account
Non-Puget Sound	\$2 million	
Puget Sound Stormwater Projects	\$14.17 million	\$9.17 Million State Building Construction Account \$5 Million Local Toxics Control Account
Stormwater Projects, Non-Puget Sound	\$3 million	State Toxics Control Account
	Total: \$26.17 million	

With this funding

If the Legislature approves the Governor's budget request, there will be financial support for "jump-starting" local programs, however most municipalities will still need to develop some means of paying for a long-term program to manage and control stormwater pollution. Funding is just a start. It will take some effort for local governments to maintain long-term funding to come into compliance with this new permit.

Without funding

Without funding, the permits will continue to be a struggle for local governments. The state's urban waters, including Puget Sound, will continue to be at risk in the face of our state's growing population.

Contacts for more information:

Bill Moore
 Water Quality Program
 Department of Ecology
 360-407-6444
 E-mail: bmoo461@ecy.wa.gov

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