

Side-by-Side River and Stream Sampling Program

Many groups collect water quality data from rivers and streams in Washington State. Even when sampling is conducted under a formal Quality Assurance Project Plan, there is a potential for bias between organizations. This may be due to differences in sample collection, processing, or analytical procedures.

What is this program?

The purpose of this program is to have as many participants as possible take water quality samples at the same place at the same time and compare their results. Documenting that results are comparable will allow results to be combined for a more complete assessment of water quality in Washington.

Why should you sign up?

Participating in this program will give you confidence that your data are comparable to everyone else's, and will allow you to demonstrate that comparability to your data users. In cases where data aren't comparable, the Department of Ecology may be able to help identify and resolve the problem.

What is Ecology's responsibility?

Ecology's Environmental Assessment Program administers the program, collates the data submitted to us, and reports results on the Internet. If participants find inconsistencies in their data, we may be able to provide help to identify problems.

What is your responsibility?

Participants are asked to sample at least every three months at one of 13 stations located around the state and to provide the results to us at Ecology so we can post them on the web.



Ecology staff sampling the Lake Tapps outlet.



Chris Coffin, Ecology scientist, waiting for a pH result.



Bill Ward, Ecology scientist, working at the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River.



Ecology staff hand-dipping for a water sample.



Ecology staff processing a metals sample.

What water quality characteristics are included?

We routinely measure the water quality characteristics listed below. We also sample for total organic carbon, hardness, streamflow, and total and dissolved metals at a few stations. You're invited to sample any combination of these, or surrogates such as Kjeldahl nitrogen or enterococcus bacteria.

ammonia	turbidity	oxygen	phosphorus, total
conductivity	nitrate plus nitrite	pH	suspended solids
fecal coliform bacteria	nitrogen, total	phosphorus, soluble reactive	temperature

How do you sign up?

Anyone is welcome. Participation is as easy as 1-2-3:

- (1) Fill out a short questionnaire.
- (2) Collect some samples at the right time and place.
- (3) Send in your results.

The questionnaire, sampling schedules, previous results, and other information are available at this web site: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/fw_riv/SxSIndex.html, or you can contact us directly.

Where can you sample?

There are at least 82 places around the state where you can sample with us. However, if participants sample at one of 13 "preferred" stations, comparable data may be available from more than two sampling groups. We sample at 62 long-term stations, and at 20+ basin stations that change every October. Current basin stations are listed on the Sampling Schedule web page. A list of upcoming basin stations is usually available on request by August.

Why can't this program sample at your station?

We hope to have dozens of volunteer participants in this program. It would be impossible for us to conduct sampling at each participant's station. Also, concentrating sampling at Ecology's preferred stations may allow comparisons of more than two groups, which will help when correcting inconsistencies.

Can you see the results?

Results are posted on Ecology's website based on an identifier that you provide. If you wish, your organization can remain anonymous on the website.

For more information:

Contact Dave Hallock: 360-407-6681 or daha461@ecy.wa.gov. For more details about the program: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/fw_riv/SxSIndex.html

Special accommodations: If you need this publication in an alternate format, call Joan LeTourneau at 360-407-6764. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.