

Local Government Stormwater Grants Program

The problem

Stormwater is a leading contributor to water pollution in our urban waterways. It is Washington's fastest growing water quality problem with the nearly exponential growth of many urban areas. While many local governments have established stormwater programs and are addressing stormwater infrastructure needs, their focus historically addressed stormwater flooding problems, and only incidentally addressed harm to water quality from urban stormwater runoff.

At least three regulatory programs are changing this focus:

- EPA-mandated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit Phase II Municipal Stormwater Requirements.
- Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and subsequent detailed implementation plans for urban water bodies.
- Water quality issues, such as endangered and threatened species, watershed plans, and underground injection issues.

Solutions

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 and a willingness to begin fixing existing urban stormwater problems. They also need to develop and implement stormwater management programs to prevent future stormwater problems. Local government actions are key if Washington residents are to enjoy improved water quality in their communities. Also, there will be less long-term damage to streams and public and private property. Preventing these damages brings long-term cost savings to taxpaying citizens.

MORE INFORMATION

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Washington's current investment in stormwater solutions

In 2005 the state Legislature allocated \$2.7 million in grants to 33 jurisdictions, plus \$300,000 to Mason County for stormwater-related projects. The 2007 Legislature passed the 2007-2009 Biennium Operating Budget with funds to assist local governments with stormwater management needs.

In the 2007-2009 budget, the **Legislature appropriated \$9 million for local government grants for municipal stormwater programs, including but not limited to:**

- A. Implementation of Phase II municipal stormwater NPDES permits.
- B. Stormwater source control for toxics in association with clean-up of contaminated sediment sites.
- C. Stormwater source control programs for shellfish protection districts where stormwater is a significant contributor.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) developed the Local Government Stormwater Grants Program, and the Legislature specified the allocation of funds as follows:

- Projects within the Puget Sound Basin: \$7 million.
- Projects outside the Puget Sound Basin: \$2 million.

Eligible activities under the program include but are not limited to:

- Conducting inventories of stormwater sources.
- Establishing and refining stormwater utilities, including stable rate structures; developing stormwater ordinances and regulations; initial staffing; and other capacity-building activities to facilitate ongoing stormwater management needs.
- Reviewing existing and model stormwater regulations.
- Mapping or developing geographic information systems of stormwater system infrastructure.
- Implementing source-control activities, such as drain stenciling; business inspections; and public information and communication.
- Identifying and removing illicit stormwater discharges into municipal separate storm sewer systems.
- Completing detailed plans like stormwater management plans; engineering reports or facilities plans (including financing options and choices); education and outreach plans; and source-control progress reports.
- Purchasing equipment for conducting stormwater monitoring.
- Evaluating stormwater quality.
- Conducting other activities consistent with legislative provisos for this program or local and regional stormwater management programs or permit compliance, which can be completed within the June 30, 2009, deadline.

Recipients are tailoring the use of these grant funds to their local needs. A large number of cities are using the funds to support stormwater planning efforts that are required by the NPDES Phase II Permit. Other jurisdictions are purchasing needed equipment for maintenance of stormwater facilities; constructing treatment or monitoring facilities; mapping their stormwater control resources (and incorporating that information into their geographic information system); and conducting outreach or public-education programs.

Shellfish protection districts are similarly planning a variety of uses of these funds for purposes of stormwater source control: retrofitting a stormwater outfall for bacteria treatment; stormwater planning; and installing best management practices (BMPs) or other facilities to clean up stormwater runoff.

To date Ecology has signed agreements with more than 100 local governments for this funding.