

Washington State Department of Transportation Municipal Stormwater General Permit

Permit overview

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules require operators of municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) to develop and implement a stormwater management program.

An MS4 is a conveyance or system of conveyances (includes roads with drainage systems, municipal streets, catch basins, curbs, gutters, ditches, human-made channels, or storm drains) owned or operated by a public entity, including state departments of transportation. Therefore, Washington's Department of Transportation (WSDOT) must seek and obtain coverage under a municipal stormwater permit for many of its facilities.

Ecology developed the Phase I and Phase II municipal stormwater general permits for municipalities and others that own or operate MS4s serving urban areas. WSDOT applied for its own permit because they believed a WSDOT-only permit better fits the highway system and the nature of its operations – Ecology agreed.

WSDOT updated its 1997 Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) to meet the new minimum performance measures during permit development. Ecology incorporated WSDOT's 2008 SWMP plan into its new state stormwater permit as an appendix. Therefore, there will be no delay between issuing the permit and WSDOT efforts to begin implementing the Ecology-approved SWMP. For more information on the SWMP go to www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0810045.pdf

WSDOT also updated its Highway Runoff Manual (HRM) for consistency with Ecology's stormwater runoff manual with respect to WSDOT operations. Ecology and WSDOT agreed that WSDOT would continue to apply the revised HRM guidelines statewide. Statewide application of the HRM is formalized through an implementing agreement with WSDOT and becomes effective when the permit is issued.

WSDOT Permit Focus Sheet Series

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Polluted stormwater is the state's largest source of urban water pollution.



Untreated stormwater is unsafe for people, fish, and wildlife.



It degrades water quality, can contaminate drinking water supplies, and harms aquatic habitats.

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Ecology has incorporated the HRM into the permit by reference, making guidelines specified in the HRM manual requirements under the permit. For more information on the HRM, visit www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0810042.pdf.

The general permit also includes specific requirements for tracking key performance indicators and conducting stormwater monitoring to help WSDOT evaluate its stormwater management program and practices. For more information on monitoring please, visit www.ecy.wa.gov/pubs/0810043.pdf

Issuing the Permit

On May 21, 2008, Ecology released the draft permit for public review and comment. Ecology hosted three public workshops and one public hearing during the comment period. Ecology spent several months addressing 58 pages of public comments about the draft permit. Ecology made changes to the permit in response to comments received by the fourteen entities that commented on the draft permit. In particular, Ecology changed the monitoring program and added requirements for low impact development. Additionally, we made changes to the permit in response to rulings on the Phase I and Phase II Municipal Stormwater General Permits, issued by the state Pollution Control Hearings Board (PCHB). Find the PCHB Findings, Conclusions, and Orders at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/appeals.html.

The state Pollution Control Hearings Board issued two significant rulings that affect this permit. The first ruling clarifies the legal standard for municipal stormwater permits and how that standard is implemented. The Board directed Ecology to make changes to provide more clarity and predictability. The second ruling issued by the Board was to require greater use of low-impact development (LID) techniques where feasible. Ecology made these changes to the permit.

Ecology intends to issue the final permit in early 2009. To get more information please visit www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/wsdot.html

or

www.wsdot.wa.gov/Environment/waterquality

While pavement is a necessity in urban settings and for our state transportation system...



...paved surfaces do not allow water to penetrate into the ground where it can be naturally treated before it enters underground and surface water supplies.



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