

The Stormwater Problem

Polluted stormwater runoff and oil spills are primary threats to clean water in our state. Polluted stormwater runoff is not treated. It drains downstream into our lakes, rivers and Puget Sound. The oil, fertilizers, pesticides, soil, trash and animal waste in polluted stormwater runoff threatens safe drinking water, iconic Pacific Northwest salmon runs, healthy shellfish, and our food chain.

Polluted stormwater runoff

Our most populated cities and counties are required to manage their stormwater under the state's Phase I and Phase II municipal stormwater permits. The permits are required by federal Clean Water Act and they are managed by the state Department of Ecology. The permits are the state's primary tool to prevent pollution problems caused by stormwater.

The permits require municipalities to control stormwater runoff. Funding for implementation of stormwater control programs and facilities is raised largely by local governments by local rate payers. Current funding is not sufficient to pay for local management programs or treatment facilities necessary to control and prevent stormwater runoff.

According to the Puget Sound Partnership (Partnership), local governments in the Puget Sound region spent an estimated \$160 to \$170 million in 2009 to implement permit requirements. This resulted in the removal of 234,000 tons of contaminated dirt. Thirty-five percent of the cost was for maintenance and operation (M&O) to clean pipes, catch basins, detention facilities, street surfaces and vaults, and for solids disposal, minor repairs, and equipment.

M&O costs do not include capital programs or other permit costs. The Partnership estimates that capital costs associated with retrofitting impervious surfaces for the 12 counties around the Puget Sound in the range of \$3 to \$16 billion.

WHY IT MATTERS

Polluted stormwater runoff and oil spills are the number one threat to Washington's lakes, rivers and Puget Sound. The oil, fertilizers, pesticides, soil, trash and animal waste in polluted runoff gets into the aquatic food chain and fouls salmon spawning beds. Polluted stormwater runoff threatens underground water supplies that provide clean drinking water.

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There are no current permit requirements for retrofits for Phase II permittees and no minimum level of performance for Phase I permittees, but these costs provide insight to the financial burden that communities face to manage stormwater for pollution control.

The solution

Create a permanent funding source for local stormwater programs.

How it will benefit Washington

A clean environment and a healthy business climate go hand in hand. Investments in protecting and cleaning up Washington's environment play a major role in securing Washington's quality of life for families and strengthening our enviable position in the competitive global economy. Providing a stable revenue source for stormwater management will ensure Ecology continues its work to protect our waters and prevent pollution discharges and prepare for spills of toxic substances. This request meets the Governor's priority of restoring Puget Sound. In addition, preventing stormwater and oil spills is essential to support the Governor's salmon recovery efforts, a critical element in preventing toxic threats, and specifically called out by the Puget Sound Partnership.