

Construction Stormwater General Permit

The Construction Stormwater General Permit (CSWGP), issued by the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), is effective January 1, 2011.

Ecology's CSWGP covers over 2,000 construction sites around the state. Developers apply for and obtain coverage under this general permit *umbrella* and, if approved for coverage, must follow the requirements of the permit as long as their sites are under construction.

What is the CSWGP and why is it required?

Ecology implements the federal Clean Water Act on behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Under this Act, Ecology's CSWGP is *required for certain construction activities*. *The permit's goal is to reduce or eliminate stormwater pollution and other impacts to surface waters from construction sites.*

The CSWGP is the key tool to help developers prevent muddy water from leaving construction sites. Muddy water is considered pollution because it can smother plants, animals, fish eggs and damage fish gills. It can also carry a variety of toxic pollution into downstream waters. Sediment and minerals in muddy runoff can feed plant growth and contribute to algae blooms that rob oxygen from water.

Who is required to obtain CSWGP coverage?

Construction activities required to be covered by the CSWGP include land-disturbing activities such as clearing, grading, or excavating, that:

- Disturb one or more acres of land, or are "part of a larger, common plan of development or sale" that will ultimately disturb one or more acres of land, and that
- Discharge stormwater from the site into surface water(s) of the state or into storm drainage systems that discharge to surface waters of the state.

Ecology can also require a permit for any size construction site if it determines the site is a significant contributor of pollutants to waters of the state.

WHY IT MATTERS

Muddy water is considered pollution because it can smother plants and animals, smother fish eggs, or damage fish gills. Stormwater runoff from construction sites may carry sediments and associated nutrients and toxic pollutants into downstream waters. Sediment and nutrients can contribute to algae blooms that can rob oxygen from the water column, suffocating fish and other aquatic life.



The Construction Stormwater General Permit assures that stormwater runoff is treated before it flows into our rivers, lakes, and streams.

Contact information

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Special accommodations

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Water Quality Program at 360-407-6600

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service.

Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

What's the difference in the newly issued CSWGP?

The permit provides regulatory certainty and stability for the construction industry in Washington. The new permit adds few new requirements; Ecology believes the expiring permit was doing a good job.

A sampling of changes is provided below:

- Ecology's new WebDMR electronic monthly reporting approach is now required for permittees. Electronic submittals will save the state thousands of hours of staff time per year. Besides saving time, Ecology expects electronic submittals to increase accuracy and be easier for construction site operators to use.
- Site operators working near *impaired* water bodies (also referred to as "303[d]-listed water bodies") must follow unique requirements if granted coverage under the CSWGP, and will want to review Special Condition S8 in particular. Ecology has revised this section of the permit to (1) clarify eligibility requirements for site coverage, (2) clarify unique sampling requirements, including pollutants and sampling locations, (3) clarify that there is no longer a *one strike* rule—the first exceedance of numeric effluent limits for turbidity, fine sediment, phosphorus, or pH is a violation of the permit.
- A 60-day notice is required of permittees who would like to use a best management practice (BMP) that is not currently approved in the stormwater management manuals. The notice will assure that the alternative BMP is taken through the same rigorous review process as those in the existing manuals, and will assure better environmental protection at construction sites.
- The 2010 CSWGP provides language in several places differentiating how various types of water encountered on a typical construction site must be handled. For example, the permit prohibits the discharge of wheel wash or tire bath wastewater, washout of concrete trucks, process wastewater, slurries, or stormwater contaminated with concrete wastewater.

To view or download the CSWGP, Fact Sheet, or Notice of Intent (application form), or for general questions, please visit:

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/construction/index.html