

Ecology Issues the Updated Eastern Washington Municipal Stormwater Permit

On August 1, 2012, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) released the updated final Eastern Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit (EWA Permit) and Response to Comments. The updated permit will become effective on August 1, 2014, after a two-year delay. During the two-year delay, permittees will operate under the current permit, which Ecology also reissued without changes, as directed by the 2012 Legislature.

The Eastern Washington National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit covers 18 cities and the urban areas of six counties. NPDES permits authorize stormwater discharges to surface waters under the Clean Water Act.

The permit also covers publicly owned stormwater systems within those coverage areas for entities such as ports, school and park districts, drainage districts, colleges and universities, and state government campuses.

Along with the final permit, Ecology issued a Response to Comments that addresses public comments received during the October 2011 to February 2012 public comment period on the draft permits. Ecology also issued two final Western Washington Municipal Stormwater General Permits covered by the same Response to Comments.

For copies of the final permits and the Response to Comments: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal.html

Changes in the final 2014 to 2019 permit

The permit includes changes in two main areas – Low Impact Development (LID) and monitoring.

MORE INFORMATION

Final Permit and Response to Comments

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/2012comments.html

2012 permit reissuance

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/2012Reissuance.html

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Ecology municipal stormwater contacts:

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/municipalacts.html

Special accommodations

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Low Impact Development - LID

The final Eastern Washington permit includes limited new requirements to begin implementing LID stormwater management in new development and redevelopment. Ecology revised the draft permit requirements based on public comments. The final changes clarify that not all permittees will need to amend local ordinances to meet the requirements.

LID stormwater projects mimic natural drainage processes using site design and techniques to retain vegetation, limit paved and hard surfaces, and manage runoff on-site.

The permit takes initial steps to implement LID techniques in the Eastern Washington climate, soils, and geology. Ecology recognizes the need to implement LID gradually in eastern Washington, and has begun working with permittees to develop an Eastern Washington LID manual under an Ecology grant.

LID permit requirements for cities and counties must be in place by December 31, 2017 and include:

- Allowing runoff to percolate into the ground on-site or in regional facilities for amounts many permittees now require.
- For those not already requiring stormwater to be retained on-site or in regional facilities, developing feasibility criteria to address local conditions such as soils that are too poor to let runoff soak in.

In addition to the LID manual, Ecology also plans to support LID research in Eastern Washington, LID training for local government staff and contractors, and

education to promote expanded use of LID in the future.

Monitoring requirements

The permit includes monitoring requirements to answer important questions about the effectiveness of the stormwater management programs in the permits.

Ecology's Eastern Washington permit requires that permittees work together to conduct studies evaluating the use of stormwater management program approaches specified in the permit. Cities and counties have made progress in building local programs in the first permit cycle, and it is important to know whether the programs are working. These studies should provide information that will improve permittees' programs and future permit requirements.

Evaluating new permittees and areas of coverage

Ecology's October 2011 draft permits proposed new permit coverage for the city of Grandview, the Kittitas County unincorporated urban growth area (UGA) around Ellensburg, and the Yakima County unincorporated UGA around the city of Sunnyside.

Ecology evaluated a number of communities for coverage using statewide criteria, and determined that Yakima County should expand its coverage area to include the unincorporated Sunnyside UGA. After evaluating the city of Grandview and the Kittitas County UGA around Ellensburg, Ecology determined that they did not meet the criteria for coverage, and thus did not include them in the final permits.