

Focus on: Reclaimed Water



Reclaimed Water *The right water for the right use!*

Reclaimed Water:

It's all part of the water cycle

All water is recycled - or reclaimed - through the water cycle that we learned about in elementary school. The water that was on the planet with the dinosaurs is the same water we have now. It has been used and recycled through the environment to be reused again and again. The process of reclaiming water speeds up the natural water cycle using biological and chemical processes so it can be used again safely.

Transforming Water Infrastructure

"The nation's aging water infrastructure was built to protect public health, ensure access to clean water, and safely return water to the environment.

Given the growing demand for freshwater and changing weather patterns, next generation water infrastructure must address both water supply and water quality challenges."

~ Water Reuse Association

What is reclaimed water?

Reclaimed water is highly treated water derived, in part, from domestic wastewater. The process of reclaiming water uses advanced technologies to filter and remove pathogens and contaminants. Reclaimed water is always identified and delivered through purple pipes. It can be used for irrigation of food crops and landscaping, water features, and for some indoor uses like toilet flushing.

Why does reclaimed water benefit us all?

Reclaiming water allows us to protect and save water for drinking. In addition, it reduces the amount of polluted wastewater discharged into lakes, rivers, and the Puget Sound.

As Washington counties and cities are planning for population growth and preparing for climate impacts, reclaimed water should be a fundamental part of managing our wastewater and creating safe and sustainable water supplies.

Washingtonians already use reclaimed water for a wide variety of beneficial uses around the state. These uses include irrigation of crops, watering golf courses and landscaping, groundwater recharge, and even a kid-friendly splash stream in Olympia.



Reclaimed Water stream at East Bay Plaza - Olympia, WA

How is reclaimed water coordinated with other water supplies?

In January 2018, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) adopted WAC Chapter 173-219 on Reclaimed Water. This rule creates the regulatory framework for issuing individual permits for the generation, distribution, and use of reclaimed water.

RCW Chapter 90.46 directed Ecology to work with the Department of Health (Health) and stakeholders to develop this rule to "encourage the use of reclaimed water" while protecting public health and the environment. To further the use of and ensure proper planning for reclaimed water, RCW 90.46.120 (2) states, "...regional water supply plans, or any other potable water supply plans prepared by multiple water purveyors, must consider the proposed use of the reclaimed water as they are developed or updated."



Where can I learn more?

For more information, visit the Reclaimed Water webpage and sign up for email updates through the Reclaimed Water listserv.

Listserv:

listserv.ecology.wa.gov/scripts/wa-ECOLOGY.exe?A0=RECLAIMED-WATER

Webpage:

www.ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-quality/Reclaimed-water

Contact

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Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6600 or visit:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>.

People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.

When reclaimed water is available or is proposed for use under a water supply plan or a wastewater plan, “these plans must be coordinated to ensure opportunities for reclaimed water are evaluated.”

Additionally, RCW 90.46.120 requires regional water supply planning to include the owners of wastewater treatment facilities that produce - or propose to produce - reclaimed water for use within the planning area. The rule, in turn, requires reclaimed water generators to coordinate and communicate with potable water suppliers from the earliest planning stages, starting with the feasibility analysis and engineering report. These communications continue through the long-term operation and maintenance of the reclaimed water facility.

How does reclaimed water permitting work?

Existing facilities are currently complying with the new rule, or are working under extensions approved by Ecology and Health to do so. Other operations not already permitted to generate reclaimed water must follow WAC Chapter 173-219 to plan and design a facility, which includes, but is not limited to:

- Pre-planning meeting
- Feasibility Analysis
- Water Rights Impairment Analysis
- Engineering Report
- Other planning documents necessary to evaluate the proposed reclaimed water project.

When an application for a reclaimed water permit is submitted (along with/after the engineering report), the lead agency will provide a public notice that an application has been accepted as complete. At this point, the lead agency may begin drafting a reclaimed water permit and fact sheet.

It should be noted that a reclaimed water permit may not be issued if reclaiming the water will cause a water rights impairment, unless compensation or mitigation is agreed to by the holder of the affected water right (see RCW 90.46.130).

Reclaimed water permits:

- Contain all the necessary standards, conditions, and provisions to protect public health and the environment for generating, distributing, and using reclaiming water.
- Require a certified operator for Operations and Maintenance of reclaimed water facilities.
- Include robust cross-connection control requirements to protect high quality water from low quality water.
- Are subject to public review and comment.
- May be appealed.
- Must be reviewed and renewed on a 5-year cycle.

