



2019 Geographic Response Plans Statewide Review

Executive Summary

The 2015 Oil Transportation Safety Act (now codified in RCW 90.56.569) directed the following of the Department of Ecology:

- (1) The department must provide to the relevant policy and fiscal committees of the senate and house of representatives:
 - (a) A review of all state geographic response plans and any federal requirements as needed in contingency plans required under RCW [90.56.210](#) and [88.46.060](#) by December 31, 2015; and
 - (b) Updates every two years, beginning December 31, 2017, and ending December 31, 2021, consistent with the requirements of RCW [43.01.036](#), as to the progress made in completing state and federal geographic response plans as needed in contingency plans required under RCW [90.56.060](#), [90.56.210](#), and [88.46.060](#).
- (2) The department must contract, if practicable, with eligible independent third parties to ensure completion by December 1, 2017, of at least fifty percent of the geographic response plans as needed in contingency plans required under RCW [90.56.210](#) and [88.46.060](#) for the state.
- (3) All requirements in this section are subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purposes described.

Before delivering the 2017 legislative report, Ecology received further direction from the Legislature regarding Geographic Response Plans (GRPs). The 2018 Strengthening Oil Transportation Safety Act (codified in RCW [90.56.210](#), and [88.46.060](#)) directed Ecology and oil spill plan holders to address resources at risk from non-floating oil (NFO) by adding relevant information into the GRPs, such as water column species and subsurface resources.

To implement this latest legislative direction, Ecology updated [Chapter 173-186](#) Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and [Chapter 173-182 WAC](#). All existing GRP areas where the potential spills from NFO exists will be updated in an 18-month period in order for industry plans to reference the GRPs and meet this requirement. Tables 1 and 2 contain the list of those GRPs. These updates will result in compliance with the 2018 updates to the law for Washington's facility, vessel, pipeline and railroad oil spill contingency planholders.

This is the third Legislative report from Ecology on the progress of GRP development. This report will focus on updates to implement the NFO requirements, as well as the results of a GRP

user survey conducted to gather data to improve the usability of GRPs, streamline the development process and result in better engagement with citizens on the preparation of GRPs.

GRPs and Preparing for a NFO response

The Northwest Area Contingency Plan (NWACP) contains guidance on cleanup tactics for non-floating oils. GRPs are developed for the NWACP. The next updates will:

- Add information on species and habitat that are at risk from spills, both in the water column and on the seafloor.
- Analyze the oil types and the properties of oils transported in Washington and define which oils may have the potential to submerge or sink.
- Determine the environmental factors that could lead to NFO (salinity, water temperature, etc.) within GRP areas.
- Determine the locations near potential spill origin points where a NFO response may need to occur.

Additionally our priority for GRP updates is to continue developing the required endangered species data reported on in the previous legislative report.

GRP user survey – streamlining the process

The process to create GRPs is lengthy and resource intensive for the response community at large. During 2019, a working task force for the NWACP conducted a user survey to focus on improvements to streamline and modernize GRP planning. The group included members from federal and state agencies, tribes, industry, response professionals, and private citizens. The goals of the task force were to:

- Understand more about who uses GRPs and how they access them;
- Gather ideas to innovate the GRP development & publication process;
- Identify and incorporate best practices from around the nation.

Survey findings suggest that moving towards digital mediums may improve access to GRP content and searchability while eliminating the burden of carrying paper in the field. The survey also suggests the desire for more frequent updates, reflecting more timely environmental changes and conditions in specific geographic areas. All surveyed noted that the level of engagement from the public varies from one community to another, and that it can be challenging based on locations and familiarity with oil spill issues.

To address these issues, we have begun shifting the GRPs to an online tool which includes an interactive map for finding GRPs, strategies and resources at risk information. This online platform hosts the [OilSpills101 website](http://www.oilspills101.wa.gov) (www.oilspills101.wa.gov). We hope the transition to the online platform significantly reduces the time to publish GRPs, allows for timely updates, and results in an open platform to engage with trustees and communities on oil spill planning.

We will also use this site to engage in a dialogue with the public and tribes when updating GRPs on non-floating oils. We will also use listening sessions, webinars, workshops and other tools to help achieve the level of outreach needed.

Next GRP Priorities for 2020–2021

Table 1 and Table 2 are a full list of the GRPs currently being revised to include NFO information to comply with changes in the law. These GRPs are within areas where potentially NFOs are transported or stored. Please see Figure 1 for map of all GRPs. Table 1 is a list of GRPs that will be fully updated, including the response strategies and tactics which are the bulk of the plans. Table 2 is a list of GRPs that will be updated only for NFO data (partial update).

Table 1: A list of 2020–2021 GRP priorities open for a full update

Name of GRP	Target year for completion
Strait of Juan de Fuca	2020
Central Puget Sound	2020
San Juan Islands	2020
North Puget Sound	2020
South Puget Sound	2021
Clark, Cowlitz, SW Lewis	2021
Spokane River	2020
Grays Harbor	2021
North Central Puget Sound	2020
WRIA 7 (Snohomish/Skykomish Rivers)	2020

A full update means a full review of all strategies and narrative chapters and occurs every five years.

Table 2: A list of 2020–2021 GRP priorities open for a partial update

Name of GRP	Target year for completion
Lake Washington	2021
Green River Duwamish	2021
Lower Columbia River	2021
Middle Columbia River	2021
Middle Columbia – Bonneville Pool Area	2021
Middle Columbia River – John Day Pool Area	2021
Middle Columbia River – McNary Pool Area	2021
Middle Columbia River – The Dalles Pool Area	2021
Nisqually	2021
Admiralty Inlet	2021
Lower Skagit	2021
Nooksak River	2021
Puyallup – White River	2021
Samish River	2021
Snake River – Ice Harbor Dam	2021
Stillaguamish River	2021
Sumas River	2021
Washington Deschutes	2021

A partial update means a plan is opened to update selected content within the plan and occurs whenever there are lessons learned from drills, spills, or required by rule. For the intended purpose of this report, this update is to include NFO information.

Conclusion

Geographic responding planning remains an important tool to maintain oil spill preparedness for the state of Washington. Because of the legislative investment, we have expanded coverage through the railroad corridors and inland waterways and modernized the oldest existing marine plans using the latest spatial planning tools. The next improvements to consider non-floating oils as part of our planning is first in the nation.

This report is available on the Department of Ecology's website at <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1908023.html>

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