

Focus on: Protecting Washington communities threatened by air pollution



Federal air standards

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set national standards for six of the most common forms of air pollution, known as “criteria pollutants.” The standards are intended to protect human health. State environmental regulators and local clean air agencies are required to monitor for these pollutants, and take action if levels of the pollutants exceed the standards. The criteria pollutants are:

- Carbon monoxide (CO)
- Lead (Pb)
- Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)
- Ozone (O₃)
- Particulates (PM)
- Sulfur dioxide (SO₂)

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Air pollution poses both health and economic threat to many Washington cities

Across our state, millions of Washington residents live in communities threatened by air pollution. Particle pollution from wood burning, dust, and ozone produced by vehicles and industry threaten both people’s health, and the economic vitality of these regions.

Today, every city in Washington meets federal air quality standards. However, 17 communities in our state are at risk of exceeding federal standards – called “nonattainment.” If that happens, federal regulations kick in that could impose new permitting requirements, additional oversight, and require mandatory, years-long plans to return to compliance that could hinder economic development in these areas.

Finding ways to reduce air pollution is far less difficult, less expensive, and better for Washingtonians’ health than triggering these federal requirements. That’s why, since 2016, the Washington Department of Ecology has invested more than \$1.2 million in projects providing local solutions to protect air quality and prevent federal nonattainment.

Preventing wood smoke, investing in clean air

Since 2016, Ecology has awarded grants to local communities for projects to reduce smoke from burning wood and green waste. These grants helped organizations like Lake Wenatchee Fire and Rescue buy wood chippers, allowing homeowners to dispose of brush and slash without burning.

In Okanogan County, Ecology grants helped the county buy a wood chipper and a steam treatment unit – allowing residents to safely dispose of yard waste and slash without risking the spread of the apple maggot into areas that are currently pest-free.

Reducing ozone in the Tri-Cities

After the unusual ozone formation in the Tri-Cities was revealed by research from Washington State University and Ecology, an Ecology grant sponsored a public education campaign to help residents understand how and why ozone forms in the area, and how they can protect themselves from this harmful form of air pollution.

Moving forward, Ecology will be working with Benton Clean Air and Ben Franklin Transit to promote simple tools people can use to prevent the lung-damaging ozone that builds up in the area on hot summer days. See [Focus on: Fighting ozone in the Tri-Cities](#).¹



Dust busting in Colville and Benton County

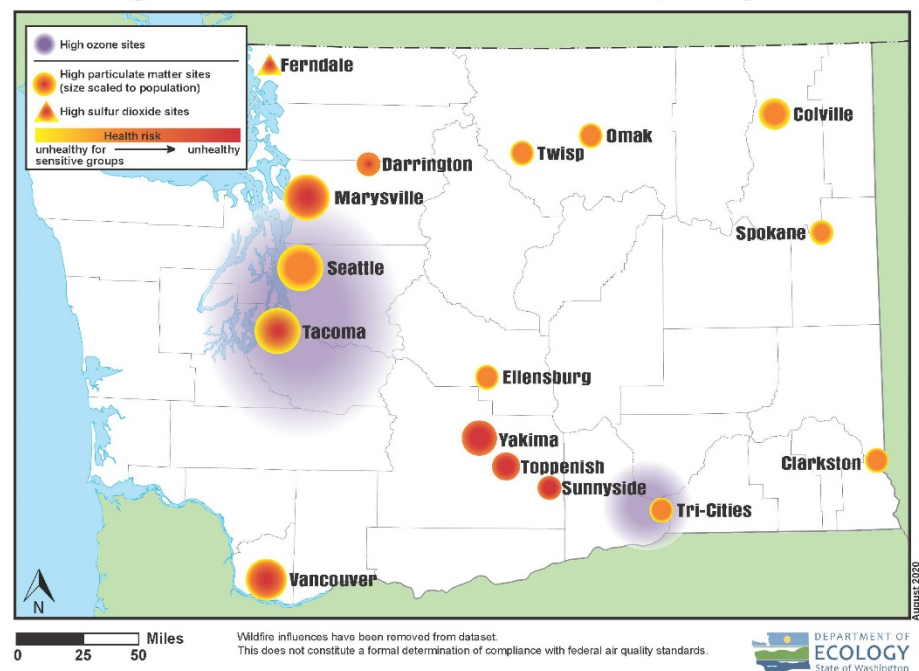
Ecology is working with the Benton Conservation District to reduce particle pollution from dust from agricultural activity by providing incentives to farmers to use no-till or erosion mitigation methods on their fields and to support dust education and outreach efforts in the area. Likewise, Ecology and the City of Colville partnered to purchase liquid de-icer to apply to the roads in the late winter and early spring, significantly reducing spikes in coarse particle pollution from dust caused by sanding the roads.

Gov. Inslee's 2021-2023 proposed budget

This proposal would increase the level of funding available for grants to local communities from approximately \$400,000 to \$2 million per biennium to reflect the increased need for pollution reduction measures and preventing federal nonattainment. This would allow Ecology to expand the current program into a statewide grant program and diversify our partnerships across Washington State.

This proposal would also establish funding to hire a permanent coordinator position (1.0 FTE EP4) to work with technical staff to identify areas at risk for exceeding federal air pollution standards and work with local communities to identify and build relationships with willing partners to support and provide funding for locally-led solutions to avoid the public health and economic consequences of exceeding these standards.

Washington communities threatened by air pollution



¹ <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/2002029.html>

Special accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6831 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.