

Focus on: Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture



Why it matters

In order to better protect Washington's waters, Ecology is working closely with its partners to develop guidance that describes best management practices that agricultural producers can use to protect water quality.

Contact information

Ben Rau

Water Quality Program
360-407-6551

Benjamin.Rau@ecy.wa.gov

ADA accommodations

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6831 or email at Ben.Rau@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.

Protecting water quality with guidance for agriculture

With thousands of acres of working farmland in our state, agriculture producers are vital to our economy and protecting water quality. We will work over the next few years to release 13 chapters of a Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture to support healthy farms and help producers protect Washington's waters. A technical resource for agricultural producers, the guidance will describe Ecology's recommended best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality.

We understand that each farm is unique and each producer is managing a unique set of site, soil, and climate factors. This guidance will assist producers in identifying the BMPs and implementation strategies that best fit their farm's needs. In most cases, producers will need to use a combination of recommended practices to protect water quality.

Voluntary
Clean Water
Guidance for
Agriculture

March 2020



Protecting water quality at an agricultural operation

The Federal Clean Water Act requires Ecology to develop and maintain guidance on best management practices to protect water quality. If an operation uses practices consistent with our BMPs in this guidance and appropriate to their farm-specific water quality concerns, then we will presume water quality is being adequately protected at that operation.

Guidance Development

We are developing the guidance in a series of chapters with ongoing collaboration from an advisory group. The advisory group include representatives from the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Conservation Districts, Washington State Department of Agriculture, State Conservation Commission, Washington State University, farmers, dairies, cattle groups, US Environmental Protection Agency, the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and other agricultural and conservation experts. Each chapter will address different conservation practices and provide information on:

- Practices that best prevent water pollution and protect water quality
- How well BMPs perform in reducing specific pollutants
- Considerations for when implementing BMPs, such as costs and equipment requirements

Conservation practices covered in guidance

Each chapter of the guidance will cover a range of conservation practices. Current draft chapters focus on: crop tillage and residue management, riparian buffers, pasture and rangeland grazing, sediment control.



How we will use the guidance

We will use this guidance in funding decisions for grant programs, to inform watershed cleanup plans, to provide certainty and predictability to producers, and to provide technical assistance, education, and outreach. This guidance can also be used by other natural resource programs to support their recommendations to landowners when developing projects to protect water quality.

What does voluntary mean?

Agricultural producers are not required to use the specific BMPs recommended in the guidance; we recognize there is no one-size-fits-all solutions for protecting water quality. This guidance is intended to present a suite of options for producers to help ensure compliance with state water quality laws, which are not voluntary. Additional solutions are considered on a site-by-site basis.

How to submit public comment

We are accepting comments on chapters of the guidance as we develop them. We welcome your feedback on draft chapters as we work towards finalizing the guidance in 2025. To provide feedback on the current draft chapter(s), please visit our website for more information.

To view guidance chapters and information on the development process, visit [Ecology's guidance webpage](#).