

WRIA 15 Kitsap Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee Overview



More information
Visit the [Streamflow Restoration webpage](#)¹.

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ADA accommodations
To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visually impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-6872 or visit ecology.wa.gov/accessibility. For TTY or Relay Service call 711 or 877-833-6341.

Background

In January 2018, the Legislature passed the Streamflow Restoration law to help restore streamflow levels. Its purpose is to support robust, healthy, and sustainable salmon populations while providing water for homes in rural Washington.

The law calls for local watershed planning and project implementation that improve streamflows. The Department of Ecology funds implementation through its [competitive grant program](#)².

Specifically, the law directs Ecology to convene Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committees in eight watersheds surrounding Puget Sound. Each of these committees will develop a watershed restoration and enhancement plan (watershed plan).

The plan must identify projects that: offset the potential impacts future permit-exempt domestic groundwater withdrawals will have on streamflows; and, provide a [net ecological benefit](#)³ (NEB) to the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA).

All members of the WRIA 15 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee must approve the watershed plan prior to submitting its plan to Ecology for review. Ecology must complete its review by June 30, 2021. If it meets the requirements of the law and guidance, Ecology will adopt the plan.

¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/StreamflowRestoration>

² <https://ecology.wa.gov/StreamflowGrants>

³ Final Guidance for Determining Net Ecological Benefit
<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/SummaryPages/1911079.html>

Committee Membership

The Streamflow Restoration law instructed Ecology to chair the [WRIA 15 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee](#)⁴ and invite entities in the watershed to participate, including tribal governments, county governments, city governments, Department of Fish and Wildlife, the largest non-municipal water purveyor, and interest groups. Local governments on the Committee selected organizations to represent agricultural interests, the residential construction industry, and environmental interests through a nomination process. The WRIA 15 Committee also added "ex officio" members, who were not listed in the law but provide valuable information and perspective. **Members include:**

Skokomish Tribe	City of Poulsbo
Squaxin Island Tribe	Washington Department of Ecology
Suquamish Tribe	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe	Kitsap Public Utility District
Puyallup Tribe	Kitsap Building Association, representing the residential construction industry
King County	Kitsap Conservation District, representing agricultural interests
Kitsap County	Great Peninsula Conservancy, representing environmental interests
Mason County	Mason-Kitsap Farm Bureau - ex officio member
Pierce County	Washington Water Service - ex officio member
City of Port Orchard	
City of Bremerton	
City of Gig Harbor	
City of Bainbridge	

Approval Overview

Ecology, the WRIA 15 Committee, and technical consultants have been developing the plan since October 2018. The Committee aims to finalize the plan for local review and Committee approval in late 2020 or early 2021. The law states that all members of the Committee must approve the plan prior to adoption. The law also requires that Ecology adopt the watershed plan by June 30, 2021, so Ecology must begin review of approved plans in early 2021.

Committee members are expected to communicate frequently on Committee decisions and progress to their decision making bodies throughout the planning process. This includes thorough review and feedback of materials developed for the plan, such as technical memos and optional sections not required to be part of the plan. Ecology staff are available to support Committee members in preparing briefings, presentations, or other materials to ensure that decision making bodies are informed throughout the process and prepared to make a decision on the final plan.

Reaching consensus on all plan components will be critical for final plan approval. Only plans approved by all members of the Committee will move forward for Ecology review.

⁴ https://www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias__1962/37327/watershed_restoration_and_enhancement_-_wria_15.aspx

Steps to Completing the Plan

Step 1. Delineate Subbasins - Mid 2019

Divide the watershed into suitably sized areas that allow for meaningful analysis of the relationship between new consumptive water use and water offset projects.

Step 2. Project Growth of New Permit-Exempt Domestic Wells – Mid 2019

Estimate the number of new homes built between 2018 and 2038 that will rely on wells as their water source.

Step 3. Estimate New Consumptive Water Use – Late 2019

Estimate the consumptive water use associated with new permit-exempt domestic wells for each subbasin. The consumptive water use estimate includes the indoor household use and outdoor use to maintain a noncommercial lawn or garden.

Step 4. Identify Projects and Actions – Early 2020

Identify projects and actions that offset impacts associated with new consumptive water use. The Committee may, at their discretion, decide to include projects and actions that go above and beyond the minimum requirements as time and resources allow.

Step 5. Additional Plan Components (Not Required) – Mid 2020

The statute and the NEB guidance suggest other plan components for the Committee to consider. For example, adaptive management and a NEB evaluation of the plan.

Step 6. Plan Finalization and Committee Review – Late 2020

Compile technical memos summarizing methods, data and results, and additional plan components previously reviewed by the Committee.

Step 7. Approve Plan and Submit to Ecology – Early 2021

The Committee must submit the locally approved watershed plan within a reasonable time (early first quarter 2021) for Ecology review prior to the adoption deadline of June 30, 2021.

Step 8. Ecology Review – Early 2021

Ecology will begin its review after the plan is formally approved by the Committee. **If Ecology adopts the plan by the statutory deadline of June 30, 2021, the planning process is completed.**

Step 9. If Needed: Plan Finalization and Rulemaking – After June 30, 2021

If the Committee does not approve the plan or if Ecology determines that a locally approved plan does not meet the law's requirements prior to June 30, 2021, then Ecology is required to finalize the plan and begin a rulemaking process. Per the statute, Ecology will prepare a draft plan to submit to the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) and request that the SRFB provide a technical review and recommendations to amend the final draft plan, if necessary, to result in a net ecological benefit to instream resources within the WRIA. Ecology will then consider the recommendations and finalize the plan. After adoption of the final plan, Ecology must initiate rule making within six months to incorporate recommendations into rules adopted under 90.94, 90.22 or 90.54 RCW. Ecology then has two years to adopt amended rules.

Timeline for Watershed Planning Process

