

Focus on: Runoff Water Pollution in Washington



Why It Matters

Clean water is important for healthy ecosystems, communities, and our economy. Runoff pollution can lead to poor water quality. We can all do our part with small actions to help prevent pollution and protect Washington's water.

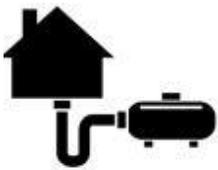
Runoff Pollution in our Watersheds

We all live in a watershed which has various creeks and streams that start higher in the uplands and flow down into a larger waterways. When it rains, water flows over land collecting and carrying pollutants throughout our watersheds into these smaller streams delivering the pollutants into larger waterways. This is called runoff, or **nonpoint pollution**. This differs from pollutants that are directly deposited into a specific waterway, such as a building with pipes draining into a river, which is called "point source pollution". Examples of the types of nonpoint pollution include excess nutrients, bacteria, and pathogens.

Clean waterways upstream is vital to have healthy water systems and communities downstream. The health of rivers, lakes, bays, and coastal waters depends on healthy water at every point throughout all of our watersheds, large and small.

Where does runoff pollution come from?

Nonpoint pollution comes from many sources, including our homes, yards, roads, towns, cities, farms, and industries. Nonpoint pollution can be more difficult to track, but by identifying the different sources of runoff pollution, we can begin to change our actions to prevent many sources of pollution. We are concerned about manageable runoff where actions can make a difference:



Offsite Septic Systems



Agriculture Practices



Residential & Commercial Stormwater



Forestry Practices

Why runoff is a problem?

Runoff pollution leads to poor water quality, which can: cause large fish kills, close shellfish harvests, close swimming areas and beaches, and ultimately affect public health. Runoff pollution also causes negative impacts to our marine waters, which directly affect native salmon populations, orca recovery and can weaken a healthy food web. Since we all live here and share our waterways, we are all impacted by pollution.

- **More Information is available on the [Ecology Water Quality web page](#).**



Benefits of Clean Water

Clean water is essential for healthy people, healthy ecosystems, healthy communities, and a healthy economy. We rely on clean water for our health and safety, but we also depend on it for local economy and way of life:

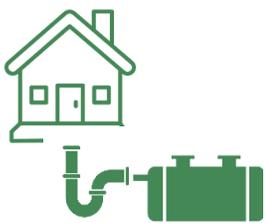
- Public health
- Habitat for fish and wildlife
- Local fishing and shellfish industries
- Farming
- Tourism
- Recreation

We Are the Pollution Solution

The best solution to nonpoint pollution is **PREVENTION**. By understanding how and where nonpoint pollution comes from, we can all take positive actions to reduce these sources of pollution. Working together, sharing information, tools, and resources, **we can** improve the health of Washington’s water and make a difference for our communities and wildlife that live here.

Ecology staff actively collaborate and coordinate with regional Conservation Districts, nonprofits, communities, and landowners to support water quality improvement actions.

Things we can do to help prevent pollution:



Maintain septic systems



Use Organic Fertilizers



Plant native trees



Use local car washes



Ben Rau
Ben.Rau@ecy.wa.gov
360-407-6600



To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6600 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.