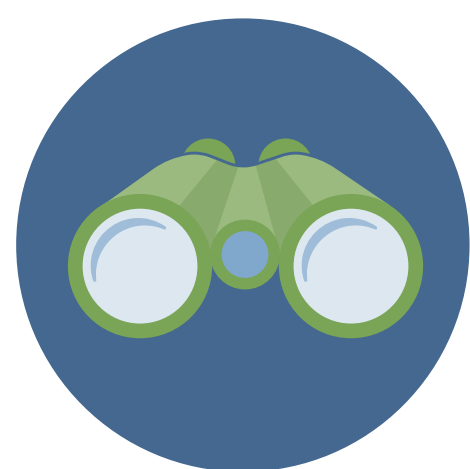




2023–2025 Strategic Plan



Vision

Our innovative partnerships protect and sustain healthy land, air, water, and climate in harmony with a strong economy.



Mission

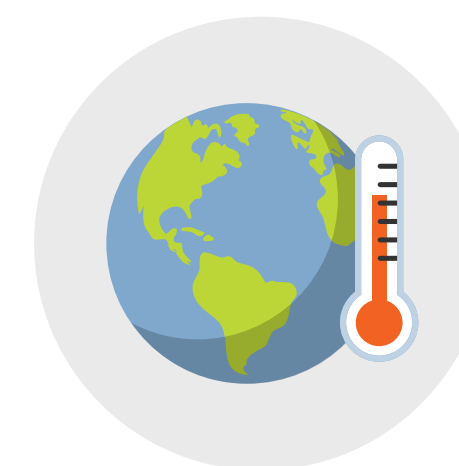
To protect, preserve, and enhance Washington's environment for current and future generations.

Goals



Goal 1

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees



Goal 2

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts



Goal 3

Prevent and reduce toxic threats and pollution



Goal 4

Protect and manage our state's waters



Values



Environmental
stewardship



Environmental
justice



Public health,
safety, and
welfare



Diversity, equity,
inclusion, and
respect



Problem solving
and innovation



Continuous
improvement



Collaborative
and respectful
relations

Principles of our work

- ▶ Work in partnership with communities, businesses, interest groups, and local, state, and federal agencies to protect the environment.
- ▶ Engage in meaningful tribal consultation.
- ▶ Communicate clearly, strengthen engagement, and eliminate public involvement barriers.
- ▶ Make transparent, defensible decisions using accurate and reliable data with quality science.
- ▶ Strive to eliminate environmental and health disparities by prioritizing communities with environmental justice considerations.
- ▶ Support our commitment to sustainability by understanding the results of our actions and acknowledging that people, economies, and all life depend on healthy, functioning ecosystems.
- ▶ Award and manage grants and loans equitably, as financial partners, to maximize environmental, public health, and economic benefits in local communities.
- ▶ Recognize and value how every employee's work and expertise contributes to our mission.
- ▶ Create and support opportunities for integrated cross-program work (One Ecology).



Goal 1

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

We strive to equitably deliver our services and resources, strategically embrace innovation and new technology, and work to continually improve our performance and accountability. We foster a diverse, responsive, and welcoming workforce that operates with excellence and professionalism. Our leadership is committed to creating a culture where our workforce and those affected by our work are respected and included.

Read more about our
Goal 1 objectives 





Goal 1 objectives

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

1.1 Implement environmental justice and equity policies and procedures to improve service delivery and access to services.

Initiatives

- Implement the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act.
- Implement clear, standardized, and useful environmental justice protocols in enforcement and compliance activities.
- Collaboratively recalibrate environmental reporting and information on violations in overburdened communities for more accurate analyses and public data sharing.
- Conduct Environmental Justice Assessments for significant agency actions as specified in the HEAL Act in order to reduce environmental harms, environmental and health disparities, and negative impacts on overburdened communities.
- Implement environmental justice and equity criteria in budget and funding decisions to more equitably distribute expenditures, create environmental benefits, or reduce environmental harms for overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.
- Implement processes that bring Ecology into alignment with current requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and other nondiscrimination statutes.
- Implement tools to assess Title VI compliance for Ecology's sub-recipients.



Our Office of Equity and Environmental Justice

For over 25 years, Ecology has worked to integrate equity and environmental justice into our planning, activities, and programs.

The mission of our Office of Equity & Environmental Justice (EJ) is to eliminate environmental and health disparities for communities most at risk from pollution and other environmental impacts. We strive to do this through fair and just practices that support the well-being and resilience of Ecology's workforce and the people of Washington. We are focusing our environmental justice work for the 2023-25 biennium on implementing Washington's EJ law (HEAL Act) and advancing our Title VI of the Civil Rights Act work to further equitable practices and outcomes.



Goal 1 objectives

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees



- ▶ **1.2** Increase and ensure meaningful engagement with our communities, customers, and employees; listen to their feedback, and use it to improve our work.

Initiatives

- Implement a community engagement plan, developed in collaboration with the Environmental Justice Council, to guide our work with communities across Washington.
- Establish and implement a Tribal consultation plan to ensure consistent protocols and best practices for engagement, communication, and collaboration.
- Establish standards in our compliance and enforcement processes that ensure meaningful and inclusive public engagement from diverse communities across the state.
- Increase the accessibility and transparency of Ecology's discrimination complaints process.
- Lead proactive, innovative communications, with our diverse audiences, to share our work and why it matters.
- Gather and use feedback from our customers and employees to inform our work so we can understand where we are successful, address needs, and more equitably and effectively provide our services.
- Increase the use of engaging visual and audio content to make our external communications more relevant and accessible.
- Improve audit timeliness for testing laboratories in response to feedback from regulatory partners and customers.



Goal 1 objectives

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

1.3 Increase investment in our workforce and position Ecology as an employer of choice.

Initiatives

- Implement the agency's pro-equity anti-racism (PEAR) strategic action plan.
- Implement recommendations from our diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect (DEIR) Agency Organizational Assessment.
- Operationalize new and revised anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, workplace accommodation, diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect policies and procedures using principles of change management to create a culture of belonging and respect for all and be an antiracist organization.
- Implement updated required qualifications to recognize that life experiences, work experience, and education are all ways to gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform our work.
- Support successful recruitment and retention of a diverse and well-trained workforce that carries out their responsibilities with cultural humility, service excellence, and professionalism.
- Develop and implement a DEIR training program for our workforce.



Diversity, equity, inclusion, and respect

We are committed to becoming a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and respectful (DEIR) workplace and are actively taking steps to make progress. Ecology has a full-time Organizational Equity Manager, who collaborates with our Human Resources DEIR leads, and employees across the agency, to create and work towards meaningful change. Our strategy will be informed by our upcoming DEIR Organizational Assessment which will help us understand the experiences of our employees, identify opportunities, and implement new approaches. This assessment involves examining our hiring processes, agency culture, and professional development and growth opportunities.



Goal 1 objectives

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

▶ 1.4 Increase our operational resiliency and adaptability in the face of uncertainty in a rapidly changing world.

Initiatives

- Make investments in processes and tools that support public disclosure, records retention, and electronic discovery.
- Modernize Ecology policies, practices, and technology to give employees the tools and flexibility to work effectively and efficiently.
- Identify legal requirements and establish, update, and implement access standards for documents, training, ADA language, language access, Ecology's website, IT software and applications, and social media.
- Support implementation of the One Washington financial system to remediate and integrate Ecology financial and human resources systems.
- Implement short-term and long-term actions to obligate and spend capital appropriations to ensure timely distribution to partner organizations, contractors, and governments and reduce reappropriations.
- Make investments in processes and tools that support information technology security to protect Ecology's data and assets from cybersecurity threats.
- Establish and document a customer service process to ensure Information Technology Services Office staff and customers have a clear and shared understanding of service delivery standards.
- Implement a Microsoft Office cloud-based software (M365) migration plan and support our employees with training, communication, and change management.
- Finalize internal emergency management structure, create a viable Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and conduct Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) exercises to ensure operational resiliency and adaptability.





Goal 2

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

Ecology is preparing for the future by understanding and reducing the effects of climate change on our communities, environment, and economy. We will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote community resilience, and prevent and remediate negative impacts with an emphasis on overburdened communities and vulnerable populations. We will do this work while supporting economic growth and a strong economy.

Read more about our
Goal 2 objectives 





Goal 2 objectives

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

Effectively addressing climate change

Climate change is already impacting our communities and ecosystems. Air and water temperatures are increasing. Changes are fueling extreme heat waves, wildfires, drought and flooding. Sea levels are rising and our water supplies and water quality are being altered.

Reducing greenhouse gases will minimize how climate change affects people who live, work, and play in Washington. Our actions must account for the impacts of climate change we are experiencing today and what is expected in the years to come.

We must also be resilient to the impacts of climate change today. We can lay the foundation for strategic, coordinated, and sustained climate resilience through partnerships. We also must ensure our tools for making decisions and scientific information adequately address the effects of climate change and improve our resilience.



- ▶ **2.1** Support science-based decision-making, including improving access to the latest climate change data and information, providing greater consistency in agency processes, and conducting education and outreach to increase understanding of impacts.

Initiatives

- Incorporate the latest and best available climate change science into our work and improve the availability and use of this data and information across our programs.
- Conduct outreach and education to share scientific information about climate change and learn from others across state government, community members, Tribes, businesses, local governments, and others about their experiences and needs.
- Monitor ocean acidification conditions to identify where changing marine chemistry may impact sensitive organisms.
- Use the [Columbia River Basin Long-term Water Supply and Demand Forecast](#) to inform our water resources and climate adaptation work and implement recommendations from the report.



Goal 2 objectives

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts



- ▶ **2.2** Decrease greenhouse gas emissions and support reductions across the state to meet 2030 and 2050 emissions limits.

Initiatives

- Implement Washington's [Cap and Invest](#), [Clean Fuel](#), [Hydrofluorocarbon Reduction](#), and [Zero Emission Vehicles](#) programs.
- Track statewide, state government operations, and Ecology greenhouse gas emissions and report our progress toward meeting the 2050 limits established in RCW 70A.45.020 and .050.
- Support diverse methods for managing organic wastes to reduce organic materials disposed of in landfills and reduce methane emissions from landfills.
- Report on greenhouse gas emissions avoided by waste recovery and recycling statewide.
- Operate the Washington Center for Sustainable Food Management and implement the [Use Food Well Washington Plan](#) to reduce wasted food, get useable food to those in need, then safely manage and recycle what remains.
- Incorporate more state-specific data to increase the accuracy and timeliness of the statewide greenhouse gas inventory.
- Establish sector-specific greenhouse gas emissions targets and reduction policies for achieving the statewide emissions limits.



Goal 2 objectives

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

2.3 Increase adaptability and resiliency of communities and ecosystems to reduce their vulnerability to harmful impacts of climate change.

Initiatives

- Evaluate and adapt agency guidance, policies, plans, and authorities to incorporate consideration of current and expected future impacts of climate change into our work.
- Partner with state agencies, academic institutions, Tribes, communities, and others to update, coordinate, and prioritize our statewide climate resilience efforts and needs.
- Continue internal, cross-program collaboration through our Climate Resiliency Team to facilitate information sharing and improve consistency and coordination in agency approaches to climate resilience.
- Address impacts from loss of snowpack by identifying and developing water storage and supply solutions in Central and Eastern Washington watersheds.
- Support local governments in floodplain management to address community flood risk.
- Increase, coordinate, and pursue strategic investments that support climate resiliency, especially in areas with environmental justice considerations and the highest climate impact risks.
- Support communities and Tribes in identifying and implementing practical responses to sea level rise and related coastal hazards.
- Seek legislative authority for ongoing drought funding and implement planning and preparedness programs to reduce impacts.





Goal 3

Prevent and reduce toxic threats and pollution

We work to prevent and reduce toxic threats and pollution and manage legacy contamination. We make strategic efforts to eliminate the disproportionate impacts on communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income populations across Washington.

Read more about our
Goal 3 objectives ➔





Goal 3 objectives

Prevent and reduce toxic threats and pollution

3.1 Increase our understanding of toxic substance uses and waste generated in Washington.

Initiatives

- Engage stakeholders on safer alternatives and develop compliance strategies supporting consumer product laws, such as the [Safer Products for Washington](#) program.
- Expand, develop, and implement toxics studies throughout the state to protect and enhance human and ecosystem health.
- Develop a method to detect 6PPD-Quinone in the environment, develop and implement a monitoring program; identify best practices for stormwater; and limit, reduce, or eliminate use of this chemical.



Tackling toxics and pollution

Toxic threats and pollution come from many sources, including consumer products and business processes, which end up as pollution in the air, water, and land, or accumulating in our bodies.

Inappropriate handling or disposal of toxic chemicals or waste can result in long-lasting contamination that causes negative economic, social, and environmental impacts. To protect against ongoing toxic threats and pollution, we:

- Identify and reduce use of toxic materials.
- Ensure recycling or reuse of appropriate materials.
- Regulate final disposal.
- Regulate contaminated site cleanups.



Goal 3 objectives

Prevent and reduce toxic threats and pollution



- ▶ **3.2** Increase regulatory compliance and use of best management practices and best available technology to clean up, reduce and, ultimately, prevent the release of toxic chemicals, waste, and pollution to Washington's environment and communities.

Initiatives

- Pursue federal funding to secure a budget that supports [Hanford Site cleanup](#) activities in fiscal year 2024 and beyond.
- Reduce litter through effective pickup programs, diverse partnerships, and behavioral change campaigns.
- Improve the recycling system by promoting markets, supporting research, providing outreach, and implementing recycled content and single-use plastics requirements.
- Ensure regulated entities can pay costs for damages from oil spills through compliance with state laws on financial responsibility when transporting and handling oil.
- Reduce the risk of oil spills through risk analyses and rulemaking for spill prevention strategies, in partnership with the Washington Board of Pilotage.



Goal 3 objectives

Prevent and reduce toxic threats and pollution

3.3 Advance environmental justice, environmental and human health, community needs, societal benefits, and economic vitality by reducing new and existing contamination.

Initiatives

- Prevent, reduce, and clean up toxic contaminants and air pollution in the environment, with an emphasis on overburdened communities.
- Prioritize [dangerous waste](#) compliance inspections to reduce environmental risks and negative impacts on overburdened communities.
- Provide incentives and [technical assistance to dangerous waste generators](#) to support waste reduction and compliance, while addressing impacts in overburdened communities.
- Increase opportunities for affordable housing by cleaning up contaminated sites, issuing grants, and working with communities.
- Prioritize cleanup and toxics reduction investments, including education and outreach, for communities with disproportionate impacts.
- Collaborate with Columbia River Basin partners (Tribes, non-governmental organizations, the federal Environmental Protection Agency, and state and local agencies) to develop a framework to implement strategies to protect and enhance human and ecosystem health from toxic threats impacting the Columbia River.





Goal 4

Protect and manage our state's waters

We provide a coordinated and collaborative approach to protecting and managing water. Ecology's work ensures Washington has high-quality water resources for people, aquatic species, and thriving ecological systems to meet current and future Tribal, agricultural, and community needs.

Our continued attention and protection of our state waters are essential. We commit to partnering and engaging with Tribes; businesses; the agriculture industry; communities, including a focus on vulnerable populations and overburdened communities; interest groups; and other state and local agencies. We are conducting research, gathering data, and making investments to restore, protect, and preserve our state's waters now and for future generations.

Read more about our
Goal 4 objectives 





Goal 4 objectives

Protect and manage our state's waters

- ▶ **4.1** Increase resiliency of Washington's watersheds to support salmon restoration, habitats, economies, and communities.

Initiatives

- Support development of a transboundary flood management initiative with British Columbia and secure durable funding and technical support for Nooksack River flood protection and restoration.
- Reduce [nitrogen loading](#) in Puget Sound to improve dissolved oxygen and meet water quality standards.
- Seek legislative authority for ongoing drought funding and implement planning and preparedness programs to reduce impacts.
- Develop and apply a strategic approach to direct our [Puget Sound Implementation Strategies](#) work that identifies programmatic and funding opportunities for Ecology to best leverage our work to support Puget Sound recovery.
- Provide technical assistance to help our customers identify and apply for federal funding opportunities directed toward Puget Sound priorities.



Columbia River Basin

Water in the Columbia River basin is in high demand for people, commerce, agriculture, and fish and wildlife. The region's population is growing and so is the need for water.

This watershed is vital to the thousands of businesses and industries that rely on the river and groundwater to irrigate crops, manufacture products, or provide a service or experience. Fish and wildlife also depend on it to live, reproduce, and thrive.

The watershed is also the ancestral home to tribal nations whose rights were memorialized in the Treaty of 1855. Furthermore, the Columbia River is one of the world's largest hydropower systems, providing low-cost energy to the Pacific Northwest.

Climate change is already impacting water supplies in the basin. As our climate continues warming, more droughts are predicated, longer growing seasons are anticipated, and demands on water expected to increase.

To protect this crucial watershed, the Legislature directed us to aggressively protect water supplies in the basin.



Goal 4 objectives

Protect and manage our state's waters



4.2 Evaluate and improve processes and timelines for water-related permitting decisions.

Initiatives

- Focus on improving permit processing timelines and local government support related to water quality permits.
- Reduce the backlog of water right applications through Targeted Application Processing.
- Conduct proactive outreach and education for communities to improve common understanding of water-related permitting processes.

4.3 Increase the use of integrated and innovative water solutions to improve water quality, water supply, streamflow, floodplains, and riparian habitat functions.

Initiatives

- Pursue integrated water resource solutions developed in collaboration with Tribes, local governments, and communities.
- Increase water availability in the Columbia River Basin for municipal, domestic, and agricultural purposes and promote water exchanges, improved efficiencies, and alternative water supplies.
- Develop and implement strategies for riparian restoration and protection.
- Ensure [Streamflow Restoration Competitive Grants](#) improve habitats to support healthy and sustainable salmon populations.
- Incorporate Department of Health drinking water standards into our Hanford Site cleanup process and permit to protect drinking water.
- Increase fish passage, improve habitat, and increase surface water flow during critical periods to benefit aquatic species across the Columbia River and Washington's waters.



Goal 4 objectives

Protect and manage our state's waters

Puget Sound

Puget Sound health affects our communities, the state economy, social and cultural systems, and fish and wildlife. How we manage and make decisions about this iconic body of water affects all that rely on it.

Much of Puget Sound appears to be vibrant, clean, and healthy, but our scientific studies show that, under the surface, this unique marine estuary has problems.

Human actions over the past century have damaged Puget Sound. Everyday activities continue to degrade the water quality, habitat in the region, and natural resources people depend on.

Survival of some species that depend on these waters are endangered or at risk, including Southern Resident Orca, salmon, and shorebirds. There is also concern for other harvested species, such as oysters, crab, and shrimp. Continued research and investments are needed to restore and preserve Puget Sound for people today and future generations.



4.4 Increase use of best available data, technology, and science to support best management practices that protect Washington's water.

Initiatives

- Develop a method to detect 6PPD-Quinone in the environment; develop and implement a monitoring program; identify best practices for stormwater; and limit, reduce, or eliminate use of this chemical.
- Monitor groundwater to assess conditions and trends and provide credible data to manage and assist communities with efforts to ensure clean and reliable water supplies.



ADA Accessibility

The Department of Ecology is committed to providing people with disabilities access to information and services by meeting or exceeding the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 and 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, and Washington State Policy #188.

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6831 or email at ecyadacoordinator@ecy.wa.gov. For Washington Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.

Visit [Ecology's website](#) for more information.

