

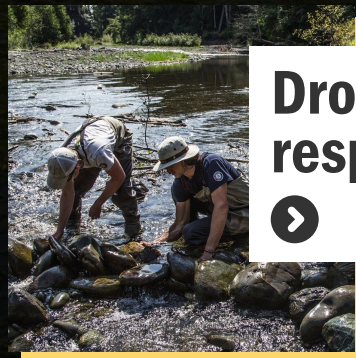
# ▶ 2023 Ecology proposed legislation

The Washington Legislature has entrusted us to address the challenging and complex environmental issues affecting Washington. Families, farms, fish, and forests depend on clean water, clean air, and a healthy ecosystem to thrive. Our 2023 proposed legislation prioritizes reducing climate impacts for those most at-risk and with the least capacity to respond.

## Learn more about our priorities



**Climate  
resiliency**



**Drought  
response**



**Walla Walla  
river basin**







# ► **Climate resiliency**

## **The issue**

Climate change is impacting communities and ecosystems today and will continue to for decades to come.

Increased air and water temperatures are fueling extreme heat waves, wildfires, drought and flooding. Sea levels are rising, our water supplies are decreasing, and water quality is being altered.

Washington's current climate response strategy is outdated and lacks an effective framework to coordinate and implement climate response work.




# ► Climate resiliency

## The solution

Washington needs an updated, statewide strategy on climate resilience. One that brings together existing work across multiple agencies and identifies outcomes and actions that address the highest climate change risks and vulnerabilities. This includes identifying the needs and gaps in state authorities, programs, policies, and capacity. As a result, the state can deliver services to communities and advance climate resilience more effectively.

Revising our state's [Climate Response Strategy](#) would allow us to better safeguard our communities, help people thrive in the face of change, address systemic inequities, and preserve our natural resources and environment. An updated climate resilience strategy will improve state efforts by coordinating activities and funding across agencies more systematically and scaling activities to drive meaningful outcomes.



# ► Climate resiliency

## **The proposal**

Our proposed legislation would amend current law and authorize Ecology to:

- Update the statewide strategy for climate resilience, with collaboration and assistance from other state agencies and input from Tribes, local governments, and overburdened communities.
- Strengthen requirements for state agencies to consider climate impacts in their work.
- Improve cross-agency coordination and reporting on climate resiliency activities, including federal funding opportunities.

Under the proposal, Ecology would coordinate regular reporting on the implementation of strategies. It would also shift Ecology's role as a central clearinghouse for scientific information on climate change to the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group.





# ► Drought response

## The issue

Climate change is increasing the uncertainty of Washington's water supplies. Recent droughts created hardships for farmers, ranchers and small communities, and killed hundreds of thousands of salmonids and other aquatic species. Agricultural crops and forage for ranchers was destroyed or damaged because of reduced water supplies. Some rural drinking water supplies literally dried up, requiring water to be hauled in by trucks to meet basic sanitation needs for affected small communities.

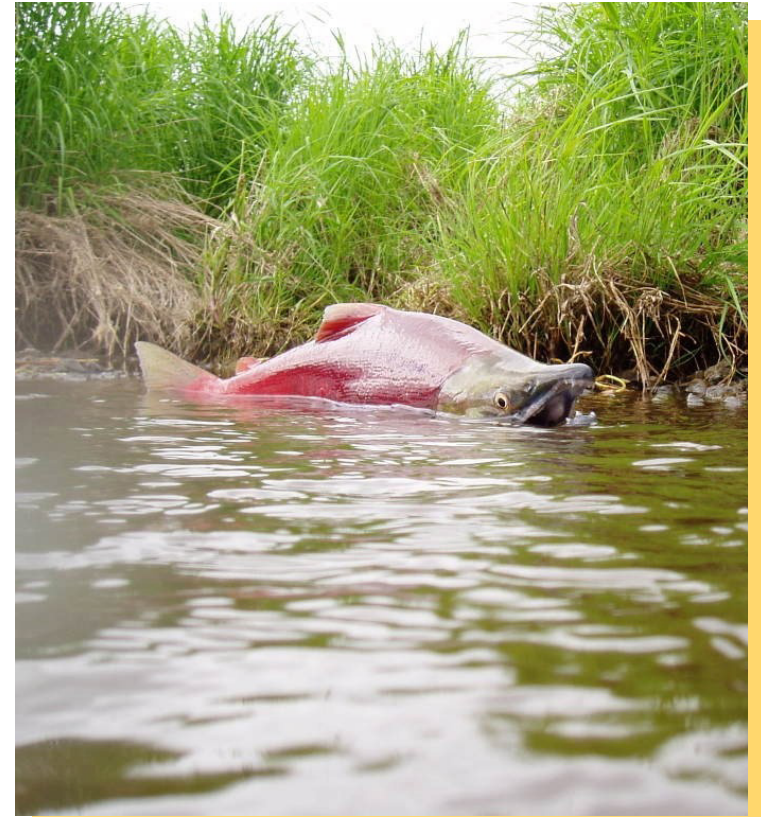


# ► Drought response

## The solution

The state needs ongoing funding for drought planning and preparation. Emergency funding for response to sudden and unanticipated drought emergencies is also needed. A combination of good planning and preparation plus timely response can help resolve issues before drought hardships become severe.

By funding drought response, we can enable communities and the agricultural industry to stabilize access to water. This would also allow for protecting the cool, clean water in streams that is necessary to support salmonids and other fish and wildlife.





# ► Drought response

## The proposal

We are requesting ongoing funding of \$2.5 million for drought planning and preparation for each biennium. We would use the funds to support local and state efforts to improve resiliency to drought. Local governments would benefit from this funding and could develop contingency plans and support drought preparation activities.

An additional \$3 million would be available to Ecology to fund drought response actions immediately when a drought emergency is declared.





# ▶ Walla Walla River basin water supplies

## **The issue**

The Walla Walla River basin faces a critical water supply shortage in the face of competing needs and changing climate.

The Walla Walla River basin has been over appropriated for more than 100 years — meaning there are more legal rights to use water than there is water available. In some years, the Walla Walla River runs dry. This is a significant barrier to restoring endangered spring Chinook salmon and steelhead. People and businesses also are frequently prevented from using their full, legal water rights.

The Legislature passed the Walla Walla Pilot Water Management Law in 2008 to address these challenges but allowed the pilot to expire in 2020 because the program had not met its goals. Since then, Ecology has taken a leadership role in the development of the Walla Walla River 2050 water management plan.





# ▶ Walla Walla River basin water supplies

## The solution

Legislative authorization is required to plan and develop physical infrastructure to improve water supplies, a governance structure to manage water supplies, and a process for engaging local stakeholders to inform management options.



# ▶ Walla Walla River basin water supplies

## The proposal

We're proposing legislation that would provide a clear framework for issues and needs found in the Walla Walla basin, including:

- Bi-state water management.
- Conjunctive water management.
- Authorizing the development of water supply projects in both Washington and Oregon.
- Granting the necessary authority to ensure developed water supplies can meet project goals.
- Ensuring stakeholder input and transparency.
- Governance structure involving Oregon, Washington and Tribes.

