



2025–2030 **Strategic Plan**

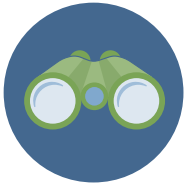


Our strategic plan

Our strategic plan sets the vision and mission for the agency. We identify four goals in the plan that support our objectives, show how we make decisions, allocate resources, and do our work. Federal and state laws and rules direct what we do, and we also gather input from state and local governments, Tribes, communities, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties.

Our core work is essential and supports our goals to protect the environment and public health. This involves our regulatory and permitting programs as well as grants, loans, and technical assistance. For more details on our core work, see our [current budget and program overview](#) publication.

In this strategic plan, we highlight initiatives for the work ahead, expected major milestones, operational improvements, and how we will advance our goals over the next five years.



Vision

Our 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.



Values

These are the values we bring to accomplish our vision and mission:

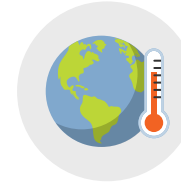
- Adaptability and flexibility
- Clear communication and plain language
- Defensible and transparent decision-making
- Diversity, belonging, and inclusion
- Kindness and respect
- Knowledge, creativity, and strategic thinking
- Performance and accountability
- Public service focus
- Support for employee health and well-being
- Teamwork
- Trust and integrity
- Working safely

Goals



Goal 1

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees



Goal 2

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts



Goal 3

Prevent and reduce waste, toxic threats, and pollution



Goal 4

Protect and manage our state's waters

Goal 1

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

Goal 1 guides our policies, programs, workplace, relationships, and interactions to implement our vision and mission. Our leadership commits to creating a culture where we respect and include our workforce and those affected by our work. At Ecology, we:

- Infuse equity in our policies, initiatives, processes, and activities to address environmental and health disparities and create a healthy environment for all.
- Strive to provide equitable access to all who use our services, which includes providing pathways for those with limited English proficiency or disabilities to access our information, programs, and services.
- Foster a diverse, responsive, and welcoming workforce.
- Implement a clear and collaborative Tribal engagement and consultation framework to ensure we uphold the Government-to-Government relationship and promote consistency in how we invite consultation and meaningful engagement with Tribes.
- Engage with diverse parties, including government entities, communities, nongovernmental organizations, and businesses.
- Listen and learn from our employees, Tribes, interested parties, communities and regulated entities while we apply continuous improvement principles to our processes, outreach, and services.
- Promote access to and effectively manage public funds while leveraging diverse funding sources that benefit the environment and public health.
- Stay current and update rules and programs to reflect legal requirements, new science, and best practices.



Ecology's Office of Equity and Environmental Justice

Ecology is taking strategic steps to address environmental justice issues in communities most at risk from pollution and other environmental impacts. People from low-income populations, communities of color, and Indigenous people are disproportionately burdened by environmental harms, denied access to environmental benefits, and are often most impacted by climate change.

Ecology strives to address these disparities. We engage communities in agency activities and decisions and promote the equitable spending of resources. Ecology also prioritizes services for the people and places most at risk to advance environmental protection for all. [Our Office of Equity and Environmental Justice](#) promotes the well-being and resilience of Ecology's workforce and communities across Washington.



Goal 1 Objectives

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

▶ 1.1 Improve the access to, effectiveness, and timeliness of information, engagement, and services.

Initiatives:

- A. Implement environmental justice goals and initiatives to reduce environmental and health disparities and advance environmental justice in our programs.
- B. Implement Ecology's Community Engagement Plan, leveraging our internal engagement network to coordinate and promote the guidance and best practices in the plan.
- C. Strengthen Ecology's language access practices through policy, guidance, training, technical assistance, and performance measures.
- D. Enhance our Tribal outreach, engagement, and consultation by implementing an updated Tribal engagement and consultation framework.
- E. Assess user experience with our website to understand how customers use it and use that data to update its design.
- F. Implement a process for community members and organizations to submit environmentally beneficial project ideas for Ecology's review and approval. Individuals or businesses that we take enforcement actions on can then propose to implement these ideas as part of an enforcement settlement.



Engagement at Ecology

Ecology continues to build upon its long-standing commitment to uphold the Government-to-Government relationship with federally recognized Tribes and engage with Washington's diverse public. With fresh momentum provided by the [HEAL Act](#) (Chapter 70A.02 RCW), we are taking action to center equity and environmental justice in our community engagement and enhance how we engage and consult with Tribes. To support this work, Ecology created several new positions in our Office of Equity and Environmental Justice that focus on equitable language access and community engagement across Ecology's programs. This will help us reduce access barriers, facilitate equitable opportunities for engagement, and strengthen our relationships with Tribes and communities.



Goal 1 Objectives

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

▶ 1.2 Improve recruiting, hiring, and retention practices and employee satisfaction to support a diverse, knowledgeable, inclusive, and skilled workforce.

Initiatives:

- A. Develop and implement Ecology's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Respect (DEIR) Strategic Plan based on feedback and results from our previous assessment and employee feedback.
- B. Improve the hiring process to mitigate bias, build job seeker resources, increase employee and applicant understanding of the recruitment process, and reduce barriers to applying, interviewing, and getting hired.
- C. Improve the employee onboarding experience by collaborating and partnering with employees, implementing improved business processes, and ensuring new employees and hiring managers have the information and resources they need.
- D. Develop and implement employee engagement and retention strategies based on insights gained through our DEIR Dashboard, Employee Engagement Survey, DEIR Organizational Assessment, and employee surveys.
- E. Develop and communicate employee development pathways that include:
 - Developmental assignments.
 - Mentorship programs.
 - Training opportunities.
 - Technical, critical, and scientific knowledge transfer approaches.
- F. Increase employees' understanding of the required training timelines through automated workflows, consistent branding and marketing, and employee dashboards.
- G. Design and implement standardized and streamlined Human Resources business processes, leveraging opportunities for digital routing, approval and records management.



Goal 1 Objectives

Support and engage our communities, customers, and employees

1.3 Improve our financial and operational resilience and adaptability.

Initiatives:

- A. Examine and advance equitable access to and distribute funding through grants, loans, vouchers, contracts, and other expenditure mechanisms.
- B. Conduct annual comprehensive Safety and Health Performance Assessments (SHPAs) at our facilities to identify and mitigate potential hazards.
- C. Implement our Ecology Data Strategy, adopt updated technologies, and transition to electronic workflows to enhance our operational efficiency, ensure data accuracy, and promote sustainability.
- D. Modernize our enforcement tracking database to improve its efficiency, track actions more clearly, and advance our data analytics.
- E. Fully support implementing One Washington (OneWA; a new statewide financial system). This includes increasing staff support to manage organizational change, training staff, and more complex and custom development of Ecology's financial and human resource systems.
- F. Implement our Enterprise Content Management system (ECM) using automated workflows and standardized electronic systems to manage records and data.
- G. Improve agency quality assurance guidance, transparency, and consistency that aligns with federal guidance.



Ecology's approach to budget equity

We are integrating environmental justice and community engagement into decision processes related to budget development, contracts, grant and loan funding programs, and other expenditures. This includes:

- Evaluating program activities and expenditures for service equity and funding distribution gaps.
- Incorporating environmental justice considerations into grant scoring criteria.
- Advancing opportunities to direct program resources to areas and communities most in need.

We also set the goal to direct 40% of grants and expenditures to create environmental benefits for vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.



Goal 2

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

Ecology prepares for the future by understanding, planning for, and reducing the effects of climate change on our communities, environment, and economy. We prioritize reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the long-term goal of eliminating use of fossil fuels and achieving our legal requirement to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. We also focus on addressing climate change impacts including wildfire, drought, flooding, increased temperatures and ocean acidification. We prevent and remediate negative effects of climate change while supporting a strong and clean economy, with an emphasis on addressing environmental and health disparities for vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.





Goal 2 Objectives

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

▶ 2.1 Decrease greenhouse gas emissions rapidly and equitably across the state to meet 2030, 2040, and 2050 statutory emissions limits.

Initiatives:

- A. Implement Washington's [Cap-and-Invest Program](#) and pursue linking with the joint California and Québec carbon market.
- B. Implement the [Clean Fuel Standard](#) and continue to grow a market to decrease the carbon intensity of Washington's transportation fuels.
- C. Transition the state away from using restricted [hydrofluorocarbons](#), which are potent greenhouse gases.
- D. Reduce transportation emissions through the [Clean Vehicles Program](#) and conduct outreach, develop policy, and further implement the state [Transportation Electrification Strategy](#).
- E. Reduce Ecology's greenhouse gas emissions through our agency's electric vehicle strategy, implementing building and field operations efficiencies and looking for opportunities for clean-energy options in our operations.
- F. Support diverse methods for managing organic wastes and using compost to reduce organic materials put in landfills and the methane emissions it causes.
- G. Operate the [Washington Center for Sustainable Food Management](#) and implement the [Use Food Well Washington Plan](#) to prevent wasted food, get useable food to those in need, then safely manage and recycle what remains to reduce food waste by 50% before 2030.
- H. To support our work to lower or eliminate greenhouse gas emissions, we will:
 - Improve our greenhouse gas emissions inventory to reduce our data collection time.
 - Catalogue an expanded set of emissions such as high-emission facilities, waste recovery, consumption-based emissions, and short-lived climate pollutants.
 - Develop additional greenhouse gas emission reduction policies, programs and technical assistance.
 - Develop solutions that restore and enhance natural processes to reduce emissions.
- I. Expand our clean-energy coordination and development in the State. This includes providing technical assistance to explore or incentivize developing brownfields for clean energy projects.



Goal 2 Objectives

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

Greenhouse gas emissions reductions

Washington is committed to eliminating nearly all carbon pollution by 2050 to prevent the worst effects of climate change on our environment, economy, and the health of our communities. To help the State achieve this mandate, Ecology tracks statewide greenhouse gas emissions and implements key parts of our state's climate strategy. This includes the Climate Commitment Act, the Clean Fuel Standard, and the Vehicle Emissions standards, as well as regulations that reduce hydrofluorocarbons and methane emissions.

Ecology further supports this work through grant programs to expand the number of zero-emission school buses and other clean transportation options. And, Ecology implements materials management strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by expanding recycling and reuse opportunities, preventing food waste, and increasing diversion of organic materials (e.g. food scraps and yard debris) from landfills.

Working together, these policies put Washington on a path to cut greenhouse gas emissions 95% by 2050, and to offset any remaining carbon emissions.



Goal 2 Objectives

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

2.2 Increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems to climate change through planning, response, recovery, and adaptation efforts.

Initiatives:

- A. Fulfill Ecology's commitments identified in the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy and lead ongoing implementation and governance.*
- B. Evaluate and adapt our guidance, policies, plans, authorities, and modeling to incorporate consideration of current and expected future impacts of climate change into our work. Incorporate and clarify the processes and guidance for Tribes and underserved communities so they can be collaborators in this work and help the state avoid further inequities.*
- C. Address sea level rise impacts, riparian habitat restoration and protection, and increased storm severity by updating the state Shoreline Master Program (SMP) rules and guidance and implementing Ecology's Puget Sound Armoring Strategic Plan*
- D. In response to decreasing snowpack and low stream flow, conduct research to learn more about mitigation actions, identify supporting actions to improve water security, and develop water storage and supply solutions in Central and Eastern Washington watersheds.*
- E. Protect against flood damage, for example in the Chehalis River basin and Puget Sound region, by identifying areas of potential improvement. We will provide underserved populations with resources to better protect themselves and their property, and support the adoption of improved local ordinances and practices.*
- F. Prepare a white paper to support our economic forecasting analyses about the cost estimates of climate change impacts over time.
- G. Expand stream gauge monitoring to support water quality improvement projects and inform water availability in the face of climate change impacts.





Goal 2 Objectives

Reduce and prepare for climate impacts

Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy

Implement the updated state's Climate Resilience Strategy, in partnership with nine other agencies. State agencies are focusing on what they can do to better prepare communities, infrastructure, and natural and working lands across the state for the impacts of climate change. The strategy highlights what state agencies are already doing to build climate resilience and identifies new actions to further reduce harmful impacts of climate change. We will report our progress every two years and oversee updates to the strategy every four years.

*We use an * to indicate initiatives in our agency strategic plan that relate to Ecology-led actions included in the Washington State Climate Resilience Strategy.*





Goal 3

Prevent and reduce waste, toxic threats, and pollution

Our consumer product and producer-responsibility programs address toxic chemicals and pollution during product design, manufacturing, recycling or waste management. We aim to reduce toxic chemical use and waste generation through regulation, technical assistance, and incentives. Our regulatory policies reduce air, land, and water pollution, and provide vital information to communities and first responders about local toxic risks. Our compliance and cleanup programs hold polluters accountable, reduce risks, and support safely remediating or removing contamination from spills, toxic chemicals, or waste materials released into the environment.





Goal 3 Objectives

Prevent and reduce waste, toxic threats, and pollution

▶ 3.1 Reduce or prevent the use or release of toxic chemicals in products and business processes.

Initiatives:

- A. Implement consumer product laws, such as Safer Products for Washington and the Toxics Free Cosmetics Act, to evaluate chemical hazards, conduct rulemaking to establish restrictions or other requirements, support small businesses and disproportionately impacted communities, and establish compliance approaches.
- B. Address toxics in tires by developing an ongoing management strategy for 6PPD and 6PPD-quinone. This includes:
 - Identifying effective stormwater treatments for 6PPD-quinone,
 - Identifying safer alternatives to 6PPD,
 - Monitoring the environment for 6PPD-quinone, and
 - Developing 6PPD-quinone laboratory methods for water, sediment, and fish tissue.



Toxics Free Cosmetics Act implementation

Many chemicals in cosmetic products are linked to harmful impacts on human health, such as cancer, hormone disruption, and negative impacts on reproductive and developmental health. The highest exposure happens when an individual uses a product that contains toxic chemicals.

These chemicals also cause widespread impacts to the environment and public health throughout the product life cycle, such as when they get washed down the drain or thrown in the trash and then enter the environment. This causes further impacts to human health and wildlife.

The Toxics Free Cosmetics Act (TFCA) improves cosmetic and personal care product safety and protects people and the environment from toxic chemicals. TFCA restricts the manufacture, distribution, and sale of [cosmetic products that contain certain toxic chemicals](#) within Washington. To implement this law, we are:

- [Evaluating the hazards of chemicals](#) that may be safer alternatives to restricted chemicals.
- Providing [technical support to small businesses](#) that make or use cosmetic products.
- Adopting a rule to restrict chemicals that release formaldehyde from being used in cosmetics.





Goal 3 Objectives

Prevent and reduce waste, toxic threats, and pollution



▶ 3.2 Decrease waste generation and inefficient use of materials.

Initiatives:

- A. Improve the recycling system by promoting recycling markets, supporting research and policy advancements, conducting outreach, and implementing recycled content and single-use plastics requirements.
- B. Finalize a compost air emissions study and apply state-specific emission factors in our Air Quality Notice of Construction permit decision-making process.
- C. Advance and implement producer responsibility policies to address complex waste streams, improve recycling, reduce waste, and shift financial burdens from ratepayers and local governments to producers.
- D. Promote and offer technical assistance and incentives to help businesses reduce waste.

Recycling Market Development Center

The [Recycling Market Development Center](#) (RMDC) was created in 2019 in response to export restrictions on Washington's recyclables, which distressed state and local recycling programs. As a partnership between Ecology and Washington State Department of Commerce, the RMDC's mission is to strengthen recycling markets and processing in the state and help Washington achieve recycling's positive impacts on the economy and environment.

The RMDC holds discussions, conducts research, and provides business and technical assistance. It also supports the [NextCycle Washington](#) program, which provides hands-on-training and technical support to recycling and reuse innovators. In the first round of projects, the 14 teams of NextCycle Washington innovators diverted four million pounds of material from the landfill, created 70 jobs, and raised over \$13 million in investments.



Goal 3 Objectives

Prevent and reduce waste, toxic threats, and pollution

3.3 Reduce, prevent, or manage pollution, toxic emissions, and contamination.

Initiatives:

- A. Expand air monitoring, analyze trends, and support communities to reduce air pollution. This includes supporting the transition to zero emission school buses and infrastructure.*
- B. Identify and implement approaches to address PFAS contamination in water supplies, biosolids, cleanup sites, landfills, and the environment.
- C. Pursue federal funding to secure compliant United States Department of Energy budgets that support Hanford Site cleanup activities. This includes tank waste treatment, groundwater, soil remediation, and facility cleanup.
- D. Reduce litter through diverse partnerships, behavior change strategies, and pickup programs.
- E. Assess and prioritize contaminated sites using the new Site Hazard Assessment Ranking Process (SHARP) to help with site cleanup.
- F. Evaluate our Dangerous Waste regulatory compliance and enforcement process and identify recommendations to make the process more efficient.
- G. Assess historical leaking underground storage tank sites and address environmental contamination.
- H. Inspect underground storage tanks every three years to reduce leaks.
- I. Implement the new Hanford Holistic Negotiations agreement between Ecology, U. S. Department of Energy, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency including retrieval of waste from aging underground storage tanks and startup of tank waste treatment.
- J. Support and encourage the safe transition to low and zero-carbon maritime fuels by taking steps to align our regulations with federal requirements for transferring liquid hazardous substances to and from vessels.

* indicates initiatives that relate to Ecology-led actions in Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy





Goal 3 Objectives

Prevent and reduce waste, toxic threats, and pollution

Protecting public and environmental health from “forever chemicals” in Washington

A large group of manufactured “forever chemicals” are per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances — also known as PFAS. Many industrial applications use PFAS because of the helpful functions these chemicals can provide. However, they can build up in organisms and be transferred to others in the food chain. Their toxicity persists in the environment for long periods of time.

For example, PFAS are common in firefighting gear and foam, nonstick cookware, carpets, food packaging, clothing, cosmetics, and other consumer products because of their ability to resist oil, grease, and water. Because of widespread use, PFAS have been detected in many parts of our environment and communities, including in surface waters, groundwater, wastewater treatment plant effluent, compost, and freshwater and marine sediments. PFAS have contaminated drinking water supplies in Washington, notably in areas where firefighting foam was repeatedly applied.

With continued exposure, the level of these chemicals builds up over time in our bodies, our food, and in wildlife. PFAS exposure in humans can increase cholesterol levels, reduce birth weight, reduce immune antibody response, and increase some cancer rates. We are addressing PFAS contamination in Washington in several ways. This includes restricting its use in consumer products, monitoring and sampling areas to know where it is, updating permits to reflect new water quality and dangerous waste criteria and best practices, and conducting cleanup efforts.





Goal 4

Protect and manage our state's waters

Climate change and our state's growing population present increasing challenges in water quantity, quality, and access. We promote climate resiliency and ensure high-quality water resources for people, aquatic species, and ecological systems. We conduct research, gather and assess data, and make investments to restore, protect, and enhance our state's waters now and for future generations.





Goal 4 Objectives

Protect and manage our state's waters

▶ 4.1 Increase and preserve access to water for fish, wildlife, and municipal, domestic, and agricultural needs.

Initiatives:

- A. Reduce the time it takes to process water right applications so that people and businesses get more timely answers, and we better protect the environment.
- B. Increase water availability in the Columbia River Basin for municipal, domestic, and agricultural purposes and promote water exchanges, improved efficiencies, and alternative water supplies.*
- C. Expand how reclaimed water can be used to encourage water reuse, increase water availability, and adapt to a changing climate.*
- D. Initiate improvements to how we manage water resources data and increase data transparency. This includes linking water rights and water use data and improving our public mapping tools.
- E. Legally decide who has water rights (through adjudication) in Water Resource Inventory Area 1, the Nooksack Watershed. This will provide certainty and support the economy and natural environment.

* indicates initiatives that relate to Ecology-led actions in Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy



Goal 4 Objectives

Protect and manage our state's waters

4.2 Improve and protect the quality of Washington waters.

Initiatives:

- A. Implement the [Puget Sound Nutrient Reduction Project](#) to reduce nitrogen loading in Puget Sound, improve dissolved oxygen, and meet water quality standards.*
- B. Identify waters, biannually, that do not meet water quality standards and support the cleanup and restoration of degraded waters.
- C. Implement a [Certificate of Financial Responsibility program](#) to make sure companies in Washington have the financial ability to pay for their worst-case oil spill scenario.
- D. Coordinate across agencies to address harmful algae blooms.*
- E. Provide local communities with technical assistance and financial support to implement municipal, industrial, and stormwater permits so they can reduce or eliminate pollutants including PFAS and 6PPD-quinone, from wastewater and stormwater runoff.

* indicates initiatives that relate to Ecology-led actions in Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy





Goal 4 Objectives

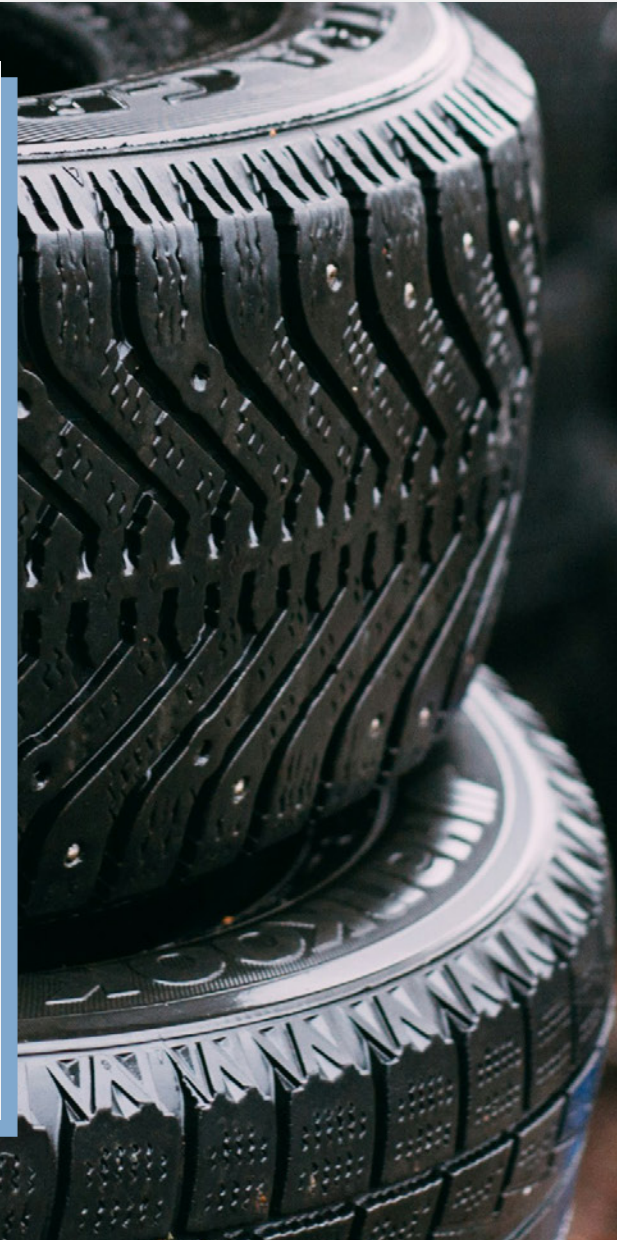
Protect and manage our state's waters

Saving Washington's salmon from toxic tire dust

6PPD is a chemical used in tires to prevent cracking and blowouts. When this chemical reacts with ozone, it transforms into 6PPD-quinone — also known as 6PPDQ. As traffic passes on roads, tire wear particles containing 6PPD and 6PPDQ travel through air and stormwater runoff and enter rivers, creeks, streams, and the Puget Sound. Lethal to coho salmon and some trout species, 6PPDQ kills the fish at such low concentrations that it is considered one of the most toxic chemicals to aquatic life.

Given the complexity and severity of potential impacts, we will address this issue with short- and long-term approaches. This includes:

- Looking for safer alternatives to 6PPD in tires.
- Evaluating new and existing stormwater solutions to prevent 6PPDQ from getting into our water.
- Planning studies and developing monitoring methods to better detect 6PPDQ in the environment.
- Evaluating tire recycling, management, storage, and disposal practices and recycled tire products as a potential source of 6PPDQ contamination.





Goal 4 Objectives

Protect and manage our state's waters

4.3 Improve floodplains, wetlands, watersheds, streamflow, and riparian habitats.

Initiatives:

- A. We will establish a new permitting process to allow landowners and developers to work or build within state waters, including wetlands. This includes mitigating impacts to wetlands and ensuring best management practices are used for other waters.
- B. Support projects that improve riparian management and fish habitat and build community resilience by providing technical and financial assistance to:
 - Remove fish barriers.
 - Accelerate water quality clean-up plans.
 - Improve stream conditions.
 - Reduce hard bank stabilization practices.
 - Support salmon recovery.
 - Update flood and risk maps.*
- C. Continue implementing the [Chehalis Basin Strategy](#) by working with local governments, Tribes, private landowners, and other interested parties to reduce flood-related damage and bolster aquatic species restoration in the Chehalis River basin.*
- D. Fund easements and property acquisitions to benefit aquatic species, protect working lands, and reduce flood damage.*
- E. Increase metering and watermaster staffing to actively manage water use, improve resilience to climate change impacts, and ensure water rights holders are complying with state laws.*

* indicates initiatives that relate to Ecology-led actions in Washington's Climate Resilience Strategy





Goal 4 Objectives

Protect and manage our state's waters

Protecting state waters no longer under federal protection

There are about 930,000 acres of wetlands in Washington. Wetlands include swamps, marshes, and bogs, and may be prone to seasonal drying and refilling. Wetlands are crucial for absorbing floods, controlling erosion, filtering pollutants, and providing habitat for wildlife.

A 2023 U.S. Supreme Court ruling significantly narrowed federal protection for wetlands and streams across the nation. While about half of Washington's wetlands no longer receive federal protection, we still protect all wetlands under state law. We will establish a new permitting process to allow landowners and developers to work or build within state waters, including wetlands. This includes mitigating impacts to wetlands and ensuring best management practices are used for other waters. Once we complete rulemaking, the permit process will contain better options for landowners and developers to make small impacts and possibly exclude certain activities with minimal impacts.





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.

