

# Focus on: Watershed Health Monitoring 2024



Teanaway River, Kittitas County

## Stream surveys in the Mid-Columbia Region

The Washington State Department of Ecology's Watershed Health Monitoring program assesses streams and rivers across the state to obtain a consistent, objective picture of habitat and biological conditions. We track conditions over time to answer questions about the overall function and health of Washington's watersheds.

Our scientists determine watershed health by analyzing the monitoring data collected from rivers and streams. We sample eight regions across the state on a rotating basis. We assess the key factors and conditions that affect the continued success of aquatic species.

In 2024, we will survey 50 streams and rivers in the Mid-Columbia region between July 1 through October 15. We previously sampled this region in 2011 and 2015. The map on the next page shows all of our previous sampling locations.

## Surveys cover biology, chemistry, and physical habitat

During our site visits, we collect biological, chemical, and physical habitat data. The status of the aquatic animals and their habitat gives us insight into how the watershed is functioning. The chemical and physical habitat data gives us a complete picture of stream and riparian conditions.

- Biological species (fish, amphibians, macroinvertebrates, and algae).
- Chemical parameters (nitrogen, phosphorus, total organic carbon, metals, and total suspended sediment).
- Physical habitat characteristics (riparian vegetation, slope, stream substrate, and woody debris).

## Randomized sampling builds a wide view of the watershed

Watershed Health staff use a scientific survey design to monitor the status and trends of an entire watershed. This allows us to accurately describe large geographic regions. Instead of surveying every stream, we randomly choose sample sites that represent the overall stream network.

### Field crews respect private property

We ask landowners for permission to access streams on their property. We do not enter private lands without permission.

### Watershed Health Monitoring, since 2009

Ecology established the Watershed Health Monitoring program to meet the goals of the state’s 2009 Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy for Watershed Health and Salmon Recovery. Our monitoring program was designed with direction from Washington’s Monitoring Forum, a multiagency group responsible for coordinating actions related to monitoring watershed health and recovery of aquatic species. You can learn more and find data at <https://ecology.wa.gov/WatershedHealth>.

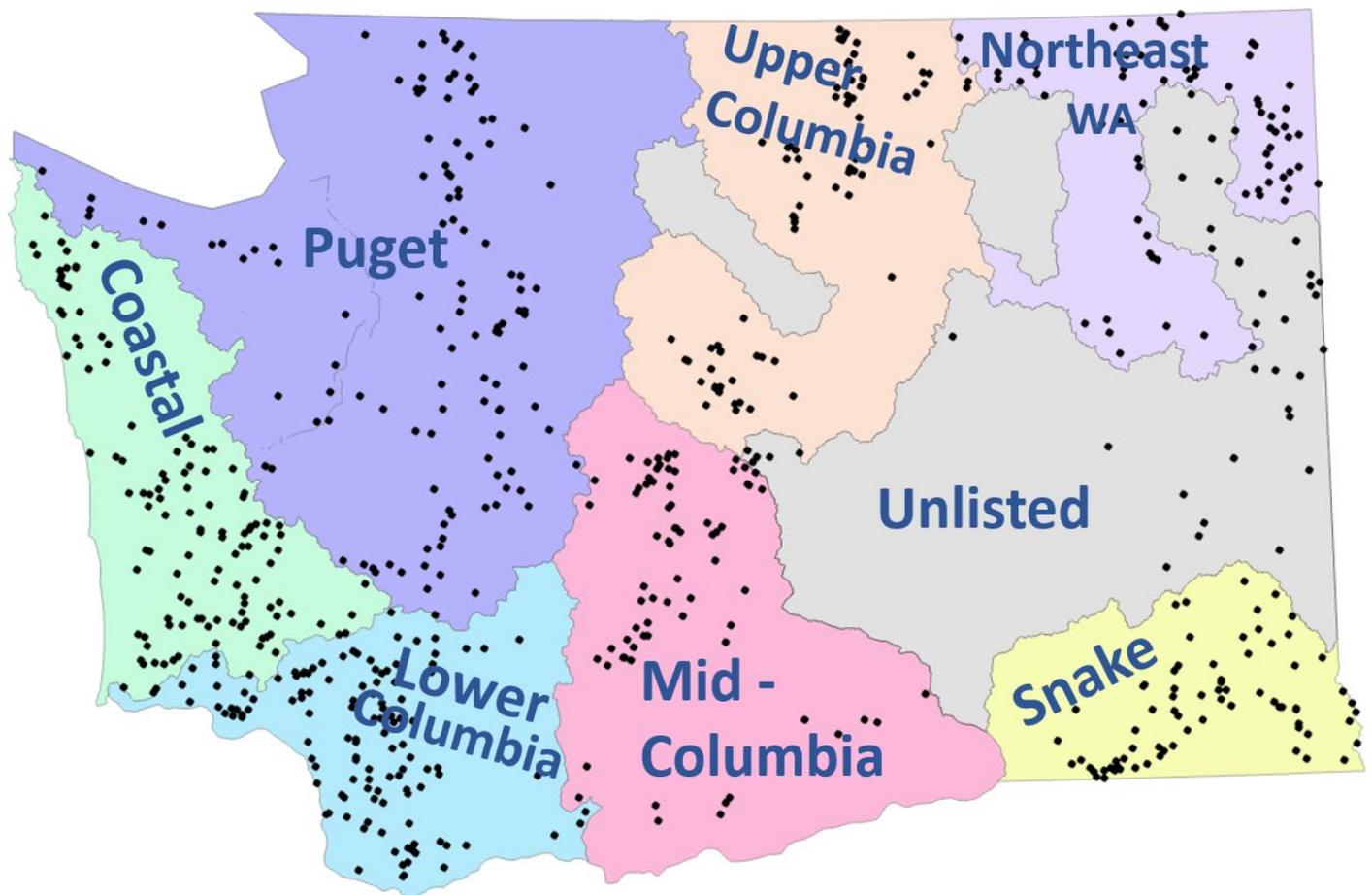


Figure 1. Map of 690 previously sampled sites during 2009 – 2023 among Washington’s eight Status and Trends Regions. Dots indicate sites.



Brian Engeness  
[brian.engeness@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:brian.engeness@ecy.wa.gov)  
360-995-3343



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