

Focus on: Watershed Health Monitoring 2025



Joseph Creek, Asotin County

Stream surveys in the Snake River Region during 2025

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 these conditions over time to measure the overall function and health of the state's watersheds. We evaluate the key factors and conditions that affect the continued success of aquatic species.

We sample eight regions across the state on a rotating basis. In 2025, we will survey 50 streams and rivers in the Snake River region between July 1 and October 15. We previously sampled this region in 2011 and 2016. 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. We monitor:

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

We analyze the data to determine stream and riparian conditions and how the watershed is functioning. By combining statewide data, we can create an accurate picture of the health of Washington's watersheds.

Randomized sampling builds a wide view of the watershed

Our team uses a statistical 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 do not enter private lands without permission. We ask landowners for permission to access streams on their property. While conducting surveys, our team stays within the confines of the stream channel and the immediate riparian zone.

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>.

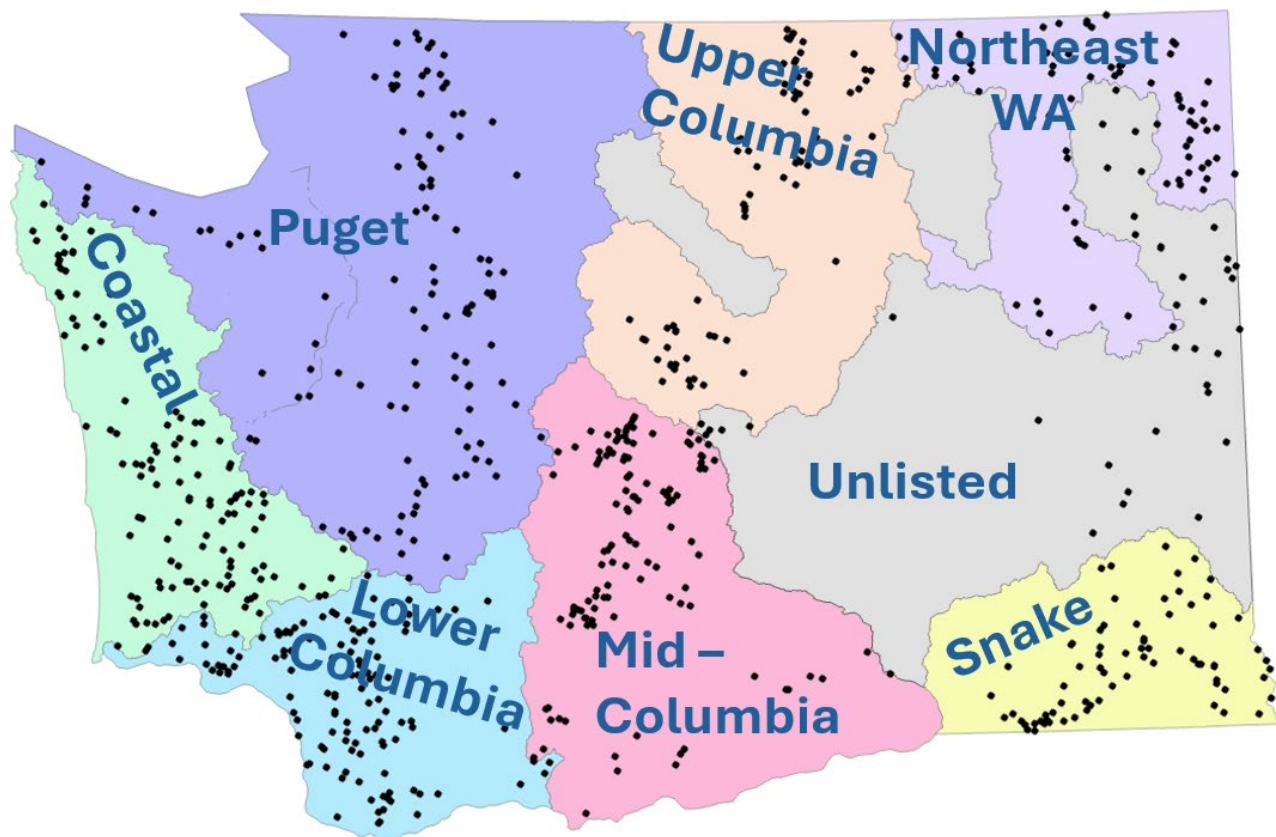


Figure 1. Map of 735 previously sampled sites during 2009 - 2024, among Washington’s eight Status and Trends Regions. Sites are indicated by dots.



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