

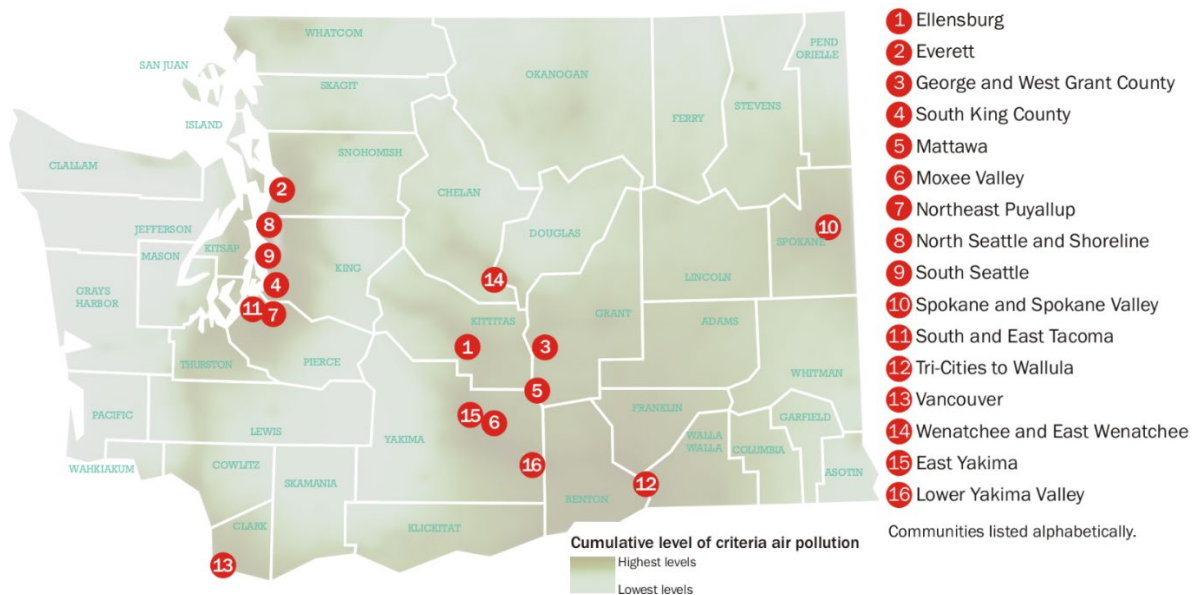
# Focus on: Improving Air Quality under the Climate Commitment Act



We understand many communities in Washington experience air pollution. Under the Climate Commitment Act, Ecology is working on an initiative to reduce “criteria” air pollution in the Washington communities it most affects. Criteria air pollutants are six common substances known to harm human health and the environment: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particle pollution, and sulfur dioxide.

## Areas with high air pollution AND environmental/health disparities

Using multiple sources of air quality data and environmental justice information, we identified 16 areas of the state containing multiple overburdened communities, neighborhoods, and towns that are highly impacted by criteria air pollution. The places are a mix of urban, suburban, and rural. They vary greatly in population, from about 1,500 to more than 200,000 people. They also range vastly in area, from less than 3 square miles to 173 square miles. Collectively, they represent more than 1.2 million people or about 15.5% of Washington’s population.



This list is intended for the purposes outlined in the [environmental justice review](#)<sup>1</sup> section of the Climate Commitment Act.

<sup>1</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.65.020>

### Details about the most highly-impacted areas

The table below details each overburdened community, including community size, population, and air pollutant(s) of concern. The listed areas ranked high on the Washington Environmental Health Disparities map and/or EPA's EJScreen mapping tool. These tools show where vulnerable populations face more risk or exposure to pollution. We also looked at other factors: social and economic differences, historic redlining, health care access, and known health disparities (such as increased asthma and lower life expectancy).

Area (alphabetical order)	Estimated Population	Size (approx. square miles)	Elevated Air Pollutant(s)
Ellensburg	16,273	6	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Everett	89,973	17	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> )
George and West Grant County	2,206	118	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> )
King County, South	204,300	68	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Mattawa	4,398	12	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> )
Moxee Valley	5,793	38	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Puyallup, Northeast	9,574	3	Cumulative criteria air pollution
Seattle, North and Shoreline	39,997	5	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Seattle, South	192,634	44	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Spokane and Spokane Valley	147,407	42	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Tacoma, South and East	133,463	28	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Tri-Cities to Wallula	112,708	173	Particle pollution (PM <sub>2.5</sub> , PM <sub>10</sub> ), ozone, cumulative criteria air pollution
Vancouver	103,388	29	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Wenatchee and East Wenatchee	32,183	10	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> )
Yakima, East	59,803	16	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution
Yakima Valley, Lowe	54,838	157	Fine particles (PM <sub>2.5</sub> ), cumulative criteria air pollution

This table is intended for the purposes outlined in the [environmental justice review](#)<sup>2</sup> section of the Climate Commitment Act.

### StoryMap about the most highly-impacted areas

Our [StoryMap about overburdened communities highly impacted by air pollution](#)<sup>3</sup> describes each of the 16 communities in detail, including specific boundaries, and how and why they were identified. These descriptions provide key community characteristics, and show potentially vulnerable populations and criteria air pollution concerns. The descriptions are based on the best available information.

Visit our Overburdened Communities StoryMap.



<sup>2</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70A.65.020>

<sup>3</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c10bdbfc69984a9d85346be1a23f6338>

## Expanded air monitoring network

We built a new portable sensor device, called a “SensWA,” to provide real-time air quality information about fine particle pollution (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), the air pollutant of most concern in Washington.

As of January 2025, we have installed 32 new air monitoring sites and 29 new SensWA devices across the 16 communities. Each community has at least one monitor.

## Grants

In Summer 2024, we launched a [\\$10 million grant program](#),<sup>4</sup> funded by the Climate Commitment Act, to support locally-led projects to improve air quality and protect public health in overburdened communities highly impacted by air pollution. Specifically, this new grant program will fund projects that:

- Engage communities to address air pollution
- Develop and implement locally-led projects that reduce criteria air pollution and protect public health

Eligible applicants included but were not limited to participating Tribes, community-based organizations, and local governments and municipalities. We will announce grant awards in Spring 2025.

## Next steps

Reducing criteria air pollution in the identified overburdened communities will happen in stages over multiple years. Next steps include:

- Continue to expand Washington’s air monitoring network in the 16 communities.
- Continue to ask for community input, including about the new grants program.
- Work with Tribal governments that may be interested in participating in this work.
- Collect and analyze data about criteria air pollutants affecting these communities.
- Start [rulemaking](#)<sup>5</sup> for more protective air quality standards in the 16 communities.
- Track and report every two years about criteria air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and health impacts in each community.
- Re-evaluate the list of communities every six years.



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<sup>4</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/AQCommunityGrants>

<sup>5</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/wac-173-448>