

# 2025 Nonpoint Plan Update Reading Guide



## Introduction

### What is nonpoint pollution?

Rather than coming from a single source, such as a pipe, nonpoint pollution comes from dispersed sources across the landscape, such as when rainwater washes pollutants off of the land and into waterways or when a lack of shade-providing plants next to streams contributes to higher water temperatures. Nonpoint pollution remains a leading threat to Washington's lakes, rivers, wetlands and marine environments.

Coming from many sources, it takes collaborative and collective strategies to address nonpoint pollution.

### Washington's plan to address nonpoint pollution

While the Department of Ecology is the state agency charged with leading the effort to address nonpoint pollution, we coordinate with Tribes, other state agencies, local partners, and the public to get solutions on the ground to address sources of nonpoint pollution. Visit our [program webpage](#)<sup>1</sup> to learn more about our strategies to support both clean water and communities.

Washington's Water Quality Management Plan to Control Nonpoint Sources of Pollution (Nonpoint Plan) outlines our statewide strategies and partnerships to address water quality impacts from nonpoint sources of pollution. It also details our goals and milestones, used in our Annual Reports to provide yearly updates on our efforts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and public.

We strive to regularly update the Nonpoint Plan, with our last update completed in 2022. Our draft plan is an update to the existing Nonpoint Plan and builds off of previous efforts. We will submit this plan update to the EPA by December 31, 2025.

### Review the 2025 Nonpoint Plan

We now invite review of the draft 2025 Nonpoint Plan update. This reading guide is intended to help orient readers to this round of updates, with the goal of assisting in review of the document.

Comments on the draft plan can be submitted through our online [comment form](#)<sup>2</sup> until August 29, 2025. To learn more about our update process, visit our [Nonpoint Plan webpage](#)<sup>3</sup> or email [nonpoint@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:nonpoint@ecy.wa.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/water-shorelines/water-quality/nonpoint-pollution>

<sup>2</sup> <https://wq.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=7sdJeBRtM>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/regulations-permits/plans-policies/plan-to-control-nonpoint-sources-of-pollution>

## 2025 Nonpoint Plan updates overview

### Chapter 1 – Nonpoint Source Pollution in Washington State

Overview of common nonpoint pollutant categories and common landuse practices that may contribute nonpoint pollution. There were minimal changes to this chapter.

- We added information on the Spatially Referenced Regressions on Watershed Attributes (SPARROW) modeling tool and lightly edited the section related to forestry.

### Chapter 2 – Washington State's Regulatory Framework

Introduction of relevant water quality laws and regulations to prevent and correct nonpoint source pollution. Several changes were made to this chapter, including:

- We updated the sections discussing the Growth Management Act/Shoreline Management Act, Clean Water Act, and the Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments section.
- We added sections on Toxics Reduction and Contaminants of Emerging Concern, the Puget Sound Recovery National Program Office, Permits, the Puget Sound Federal Leadership Task Force, and Tribal treaty rights.
- State agencies provided review and updates for accuracy of relevant regulatory programs, including the Washington State Dept. of Agriculture (WSDA) with regards to the Dairy Nutrient Management Act (DNMA).

### Chapter 3 – Strategies and Tools for Addressing Nonpoint Pollution

Discussion of our Nonpoint Program, the connection to the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program, voluntary strategies (i.e. funding and education/outreach), and on-the-ground nonpoint work (compliance pathway). In addition to some reorganization, we made substantive updates to provide more insight about our program, including:

- Adding more details about our program's efforts, with a focus on the on-the-ground work of our nonpoint field staff, the tools we use to pursue both restoration and protection, and the relationship between Ecology's TMDL and nonpoint programs. We also included more information on public outreach, education, and voluntary incentive programs, as well as more information on the work of nonpoint field staff and the graduated compliance pathway our staff follow.

This chapter also includes information on other key regulatory programs (i.e. Forest Practices, on-site sewage system regulations, the Nutrient Management Technical Services Program, and permits), locally-led cleanup efforts, and other state initiatives that have a nonpoint nexus.

- We added additional information about other programs, including sections on hydropower certification, Outstanding Resource Waters, riparian restoration, and the Biosolids permit.

### Chapter 4 – Water Quality Partnerships

Discussion of statewide coordination, highlighting the breadth of external organizations and entities involved in nonpoint work statewide. The Nonpoint Plan is a statewide plan, and this section outlines various partner agencies and entities that help address nonpoint pollution across the state. While most of this chapter saw smaller updates, it also received:

- Added information on statewide communication and coordination with Tribal staff, as well as a section on collaboration with Irrigation Districts.

- Updates from external agencies on their work, including WSDA regarding the implementation of the Dairy Nutrient Management Act, via their Nutrient Management Technical Services Program. The WA State Conservation Commission (SCC) also provided review and update of the information regarding the work of the SCC and conservation districts.

### **Chapter 5 – Financial Incentive Programs**

Overview of state and federal funding programs that support addressing nonpoint pollution. EPA provides a relatively small amount of grant funding to support nonpoint implementation, and that number has decreased over time. Leveraging other federal and state sources of funding is critical to implement practices to support the Nonpoint Plan – this is particularly true for riparian buffers where state funding goes primarily to the SCC, the state Recreation and Conservation Office and the Department of Natural Resources. Most of the edits to this chapter consisted of keeping existing funding sources up-to-date, including:

- Adding new funding sources, such as the Climate Resilient Riparian Systems Lead grant, and several Climate Commitment Act funded grant programs.

### **Chapter 6 – Recommended Management Measures**

Discussion of why we develop best management practice (BMP) guidance, and a brief overview on recommendations. When a nonpoint pollution problem is identified, having clear guidance based on best available science is critical to finding site-specific solutions that achieve clean water. This chapter had minimal changes, with updates to reflect our work:

- We noted progress made in developing the Voluntary Clean Water Guidance for Agriculture.

### **Chapter 7 – Monitoring**

Discussion of the state’s monitoring strategy and the water quality assessment. While it is the Ecology monitoring programs that are discussed in the most detail, there is also description of other key programs in the state. While most changes were minimal, reflecting small updates in monitoring efforts, a few sections saw more substantive updates:

- We added clarifying details in the discussion of the Water Quality Assessment and Effectiveness Monitoring of the Forest Practices Rules. We have also added a section discussing High Resolution Change Detection.

### **Chapter 8 – Groundwater**

This chapter focuses exclusively on groundwater, including causes of nonpoint pollution to groundwater, the regulatory framework specific to groundwater, and a discussion of entities with a direct nexus to address groundwater pollution across the state. Changes to this chapter include:

- Substantive reorganization and added details to more clearly convey the state’s tools and strategies to address nonpoint pollution of groundwater.

### **Chapter 9 – Goals and Milestones**

The milestones table contains the goals we will work towards during the five year period covered by this plan (2026-2030). These are the deliverables that we will report on yearly in our Annual Reports to EPA.

- Where reasonable and applicable, we have increased our use of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals in this table.



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To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6600 or email at [nonpoint@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:nonpoint@ecy.wa.gov), or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.