



# Focus

---

## Progress Report - Solid Waste Permit Review Study

---

The 1997 Legislature charged Ecology, in conjunction with the state Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC), with the task of reviewing Washington's permitting system for handling and managing solid waste. (ESHB 1419 – Solid Waste Permit Renewal). This Progress Report outlines the work done so far.

---

### Public Workshops Help Establish Scope of Report

---

Ecology conducted a series of public workshops in late June and early July in Vancouver, Kennewick, Spokane and Bellevue. The discussions and comments at these workshops helped establish the range of issues to study, and provided real-life examples of problems with permitting and other regulatory issues.

Through the workshops, meetings with specific interest groups, and other communication, we have heard that:

- People want an alternative to the current one permit/one site approach.
- People want the permit and regulatory burden to fit the level of risk posed by the material and handling practice.
- Local jurisdictional regulators are open to alternative permitting options, but there must be adequate enforcement authority to deal with impacts to the environment and public health.
- People want better coordination among the various permitting processes for solid waste management and land use.

---

### States SWAC Forms Permit Study Subcommittee

---

The state SWAC has formed a subcommittee of members and others who are particularly interested in the permit system study. The subcommittee met in July for a briefing by Ecology staff on the workplan and report outline, and what the review has revealed so far. Subcommittee members attended the public workshops and are providing on-going advice to Ecology staff on the permitting issues. A second meeting is set for September, to review a preliminary draft of the report.

---

### Research - Finding What's Already Working

---

An important part of this study is investigating alternative permitting approaches for regulating solid waste handling practices. Nationally, some states use permit systems that allow a particular type of handling practice or facility to come under a standard permit, rather than requiring individual permits for each facility or incidence of handling (Washington's current system). Some states consider certain types of waste as posing a very low environmental risk and allow a less burdensome level of permitting. While no system researched so far is a "perfect fit" for Washington's situation, the work is significantly expanding the realm of possible approaches.

---

## What We've Learned

---

The work so far has revealed that:

- Solid waste permits may play a unique role; there may not be any other locally issued permits that provide the same benefits to public health and the environment.
- Solid waste permits are potentially more closely linked to land use planning and zoning than any other kind of environmental permit. Solid waste permitting and land use planning need to be better integrated.
- A number of states have developed beneficial use determinations, which structure their decisions as to when a recycled material is no longer considered a solid waste.
- When people speak of regulatory reform, sometimes what they are asking for is regulatory coordination.
- No one effort will deal with all the tasks before us; it may take a combination of laws, rules, Ecology policy, and procedures to resolve the issues.
- Solid waste management is dynamic; the prices of commodities fluctuate daily. We need to think about solutions that can keep up with those dynamics.

## What's Next?

---

On-Going	Continue meeting with interested parties, for ideas on improving permitting
Late September	Produce a preliminary draft of the report, for the SWAC's review
Early-to Mid-October	Distribute the full draft report to interested parties statewide
Mid- to Late-October	Hold public meetings statewide for comments on the draft report (Dates and locations to be announced; look for a notice in the mail.)
November	Revise the draft based on comments
December 15 regarding	Produce a final report to the Legislature, including recommendations any law or rule changes to improve the existing permit system

## Questions and Comments?

---

Please direct questions and comments to:

Jim Pendowski, Program Manager  
Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program  
Department of Ecology  
P. O. Box 47600  
Olympia, WA 98504-7600  
(360) 407-6103 FAX (360) 407-7157 E-mail: [jpen461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:jpen461@ecy.wa.gov)

You can also respond directly at our website: <http://www.wa.gov/ecology/swfa/swhome.html>

*If you have special accommodation needs, please contact Mariann Cook Andrews at Ecology's Solid Waste Financial Assistance Program at (360) 407-6065 (VOICE) or (360) 407-6006 (TDD).*