



# Nonpoint Source Pollution Program

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### Problem Definition

Nonpoint source pollution is a general term meaning pollution that is not collected in and discharged through pipes—such as a sewage treatment plant. Instead, it originates from human land uses. Cumulatively, nonpoint sources can introduce significant quantities of pollutants into waterways.

There are many sources for nonpoint pollution. These include runoff from urbanized areas, failing septic systems, poor animal-keeping practices, discharges from boats, poor forest management practices and improper use of household hazardous substances.

Fecal coliform bacteria and metals are the two most significant nonpoint source pollutants that impair water uses in Puget Sound. In 1999, the Department of Ecology reported that fecal coliform bacteria impaired about 45 percent of the river miles assessed and metals impaired 42 percent. Shellfish growing areas are another example of impaired water uses in Puget Sound. The Department of Health estimates that Puget Sound has approximately 141,000 acres of commercial shellfish harvest areas. Between 1987 and 1991 approximately 32,000 acres of commercial shellfish

beds were downgraded and taken out of production because of nonpoint source pollution and improved monitoring.

The state’s salmon recovery plan identified nonpoint pollution sources as one of the primary causes of impaired salmon habitat. Additionally, Ecology surveyed streams and estuaries and found that approximately 60 percent of streams and 65 percent of estuaries surveyed are impaired, primarily from nonpoint sources of pollution.

### Institutional framework

The overall policies for clean water are set in state and federal law. The federal Clean Water Act and state Water Pollution Control Act require all sources of pollution to meet water quality standards and protect designated water uses, such as drinking water, fish and wildlife habitat, and aquaculture uses. The federal Coastal Zone Management Act requires states to develop nonpoint programs that control nonpoint sources of pollution in the coastal zone. The federal Endangered Species Act protects endangered and threatened species from various threats, including nonpoint source pollution.

The state’s *Water Quality Management Plan to*

### What does “shall” mean?

The Action Team has determined that the actions in this plan are needed to protect and restore Puget Sound. Consistent with the importance of these actions, this plan says that appropriate implementers “shall” perform the actions. However, implementation of many of these actions is a long-term process. The Action Team’s work plans will identify the actions that need to be taken each biennium to implement this management plan. Implementation of actions in the work plans is subject to the availability of funds and public input into the decision-making processes of implementing entities. When an action is included in a biennial work plan, the Action Team expects that it will be implemented in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Puget Sound management plan, in accordance with Chapter 90.71 RCW.

*Control Nonpoint Sources of Pollution* incorporates new watershed planning and fish and habitat protection initiatives authorized by the state to preserve water quantity and protect water quality for salmon. The state's plan relies heavily on nonpoint management strategy used in the Puget Sound basin and defined in this management plan and the following programs: Onsite Sewage System Management, Watershed Management, Agricultural Practices, Boating and Marinas, and Forest Practices.

A number of related watershed-level planning activities are discussed and described under the Local Watershed Action Program of the *Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan*.

Under the state's 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA), all local governments in the Puget Sound basin address clean water and water quantity goals in local land-use plans and development regulations. Cities and counties profoundly affect, and are affected by, water resource issues. They control land use on about 65 percent of the land in Washington State. They determine the type, location, and quality of development and what infrastructure is needed to support development. They also determine what needs to be done to minimize the environmental impacts of development. The management of nonpoint sources of pollution, especially those associated with growth and development, such as stormwater runoff, will depend largely on local land-use design and capital facilities investments.

Local governments are encouraged to use their authority under GMA to protect the waters of the Puget Sound basin from the effects of nonpoint pollution. Local governments are also encouraged to integrate watershed plan elements that address nonpoint pollution prevention and control into local land-use programs. The state provides technical and financial assistance to carry out these programs.

### Program Goal

To reduce and ultimately eliminate harm from nonpoint sources of pollution to Puget Sound, including pathogens, toxic contaminants, sediment and nutrients.

### Program Strategy

The strategy for achieving this goal is to:

- a. build on previous watershed planning efforts to integrate water quality and habitat issues through cooperative watershed planning and implementation processes;
- b. provide technical and financial assistance and incentives to local governments for controlling and preventing nonpoint pollution; and
- c. develop or enhance state programs or regulations for those nonpoint sources that are most effectively controlled at the state level.

### **NP-1. Integration with Growth Management Plans**

Each local government shall fully use its authority under the Growth Management Act (GMA) to protect the waters of the Puget Sound basin from the effects of nonpoint source pollution. Existing and potential effects of nonpoint source pollution and mitigation strategies shall be analyzed and documented in environmental impact analyses for growth management plans. When a local government concurs with adopted, locally developed watershed action plans, the plan's goals, policies and control measures shall be incorporated into comprehensive plans, capital-facilities plans, critical areas ordinances and other appropriate land-development regulations. Jurisdictions sharing common watersheds shall cooperate in analyzing the effects of nonpoint source pollution and adopting coordinated and consistent programs for managing nonpoint pollution sources.