

DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

Puget Sound Nutrient Forum

March 27, 2025

The top half of the slide features a background of dark blue, rippling water. The text 'Why we're doing this:' is centered in this section in a white, sans-serif font.

Why we're doing this:

to restore Puget Sound.

The nutrient problem in Puget Sound

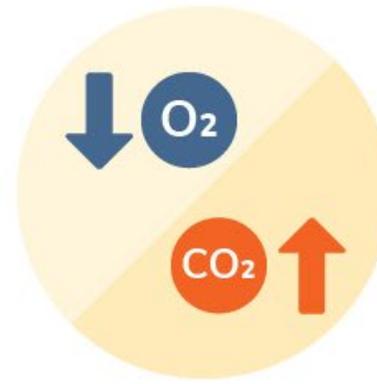
- Excess nutrients (nitrogen) from humans is harming Puget Sound
- Nutrient pollution leads to low dissolved oxygen, meaning aquatic life doesn't have enough oxygen to thrive



Nutrient pollution



Excessive
algal growth



Less oxygen
and more CO2



Stress on
aquatic organisms

Addressing nutrients in Puget Sound

1990s

- Discovery of nutrient pollution in Budd Inlet
- LOTT plans and starts treatment to remove excess nitrogen

2000s

- Science and research confirms nutrient pollution from outside Budd Inlet contributes to low dissolved oxygen in Budd Inlet
- Large-scale modeling begins on how nutrient pollution from all sources affect water quality throughout Puget Sound

2010s

- Ecology's Puget Sound Nutrient Reduction Project begins
- Ecology holds public forums on the science and regulatory options
- Public processes to decide how best to regulate pollution leads to a general permit approach

2020s

- Ecology issues Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit
- Permit appeals and litigation follow
- Permittees begin optimizing infrastructure and planning for the future
- Modeling work continues

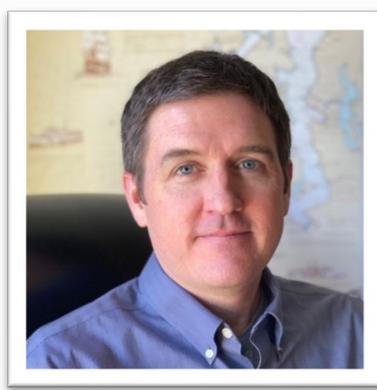
Ecology staff

Water Quality Program



**Kate
Loy**

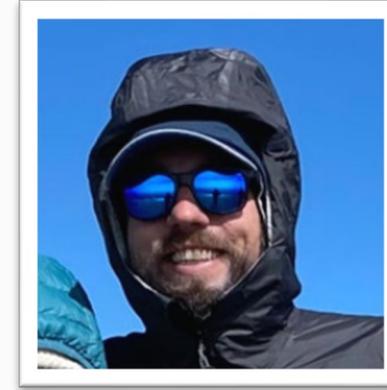
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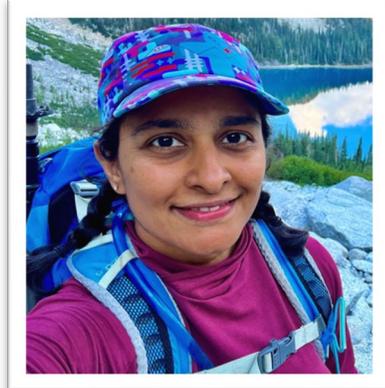
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Environmental Assessment Program



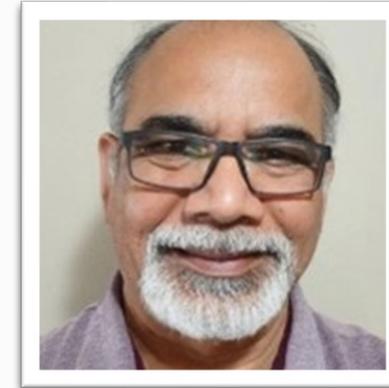
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Hydrogeologist



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Hydrogeologist

What we will cover today

- 1** General Permit update
(Vince McGowan and Jeff Killelea)
- 2** Puget Sound Nutrient Reduction Plan update
(Ben Rau)
- Break*
- 3** Salish Sea Model Scenario 2 results update
(Cristiana Figueroa-Kaminsky, Teizeen Mohamedali, John Gala, Anise Ahmed)

Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit

- The Nutrient Forum hosted discussions on the permitting approach in 2019
- General permit issued Dec. 2021 to 58 wastewater treatment plants
- While the permit was under appeal, it was largely in effect
- Puget Sound Nutrient Reductions Grant established to support permittees

Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit

- **September 2024** - State Supreme Court decision meant the appeals to the Pollution Control Hearings Board were able to proceed.
- **Friday, February 28:** Pollution Control Hearings Board ruled that Ecology does not currently have the authority to make the general permits mandatory as a mechanism to layer requirements on top of existing individual permits.

Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit

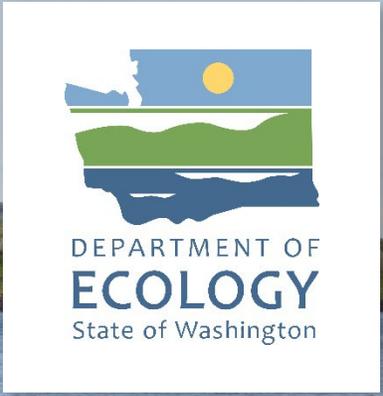
Ecology's goal: maintain a regional solution for a regional problem.

Ecology will **not** appeal the PCHB decision.

Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit

In April, we will start the process to shift to a voluntary general permit.

- This is a public process
- Permittees have a choice: voluntary general permit or nitrogen reduction requirements in their individual permit
- Individual permit modification and/or reissuance may be pursued for permittees not in the PSNGP.
- We have not made any decisions on whether to pursue legislation, which the Board suggested as an option.



Thank you

Questions?



Closing

Looking ahead



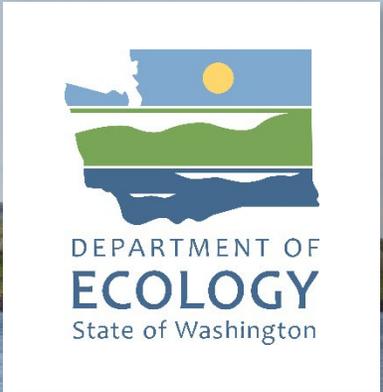
Looking Ahead

To stay
up-to-date on
our efforts,
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- General Permit: Spring/Summer reissuance process
- Salish Sea Model: report out anticipated June 2025
- Puget Sound Nutrient Reduction Plan: public review anticipated June 2025

- Nutrient Forum: We anticipate our next forum will focus on the Puget Sound Nutrient Reduction Plan when the draft is available for public review.



Thank you

Kate Loy

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