ABOUT SAM

Stormwater Action Monitoring

Stormwater Action Monitoring (SAM) is a collaborative, regional stormwater monitoring program that is funded by more than 90 Western Washington cities and counties, the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, and the Washington State Department of Transportation. SAM's goal is to improve stormwater management to reduce pollution, improve water quality, and reduce flooding. We do this by measuring stormwater impacts on the environment and evaluating the effectiveness of stormwater management actions.

Note: the Regional Stormwater Monitoring Program (RSMP) changed its name to Stormwater Action Monitoring (SAM) in 2017 in recognition of SAM's broader role – using the results of monitoring and studies to inform policy decisions and identify the most effective management actions.

Why SAM is Important

Stormwater pollution is one of the biggest threats to western Washington streams, lakes, and Puget Sound. Stormwater runoff from developed areas drains to local water bodies, where it releases pollutants, causes flooding, erodes streams, harms salmon, and closes shellfish beds.

SAM identifies effective actions and tracks regional progress reducing pollution and flooding associated with stormwater. SAM projects are developed in an open and coordinated way. The goal is to capture a regional understanding of how management actions can lead to results. Stormwater managers, field practitioners, and policy makers can use SAM findings to improve management practices and to set project and funding priorities.

The pooling of funds allows jurisdictions – large and small – throughout the region to benefit from SAM projects that are designed to produce transferable findings. Any jurisdiction with science staff, expertise, and interest can participate in SAM studies. Those without science staff, particularly smaller jurisdictions with limited capacity and resources to conduct monitoring, can benefit from these collective efforts. Jurisdictions may also leverage SAM funds to answer relevant local questions. All permittees implement SAM findings to protect lakes, rivers, local streams, and Puget Sound.

How SAM Works

Collectively, municipal stormwater permittees in western Washington spend an estimated $250 million per year to manage stormwater and they invest about one percent of these expenditures into a pooled fund.

SAM efforts produce actionable findings in three focus areas.

How well are required or innovative stormwater management practices working? Our **effectiveness studies** answer why or why not, and under what conditions, various management approaches work or fail.

What are the most common types of pollution in stormwater? Our **source identification** projects identify the most common problems and propose regional actions.

How do we know if water quality is getting better or worse? Our **receiving waters** projects evaluate conditions in the water bodies that we are trying to protect. This approach is unique since no other monitoring in the state is designed to give feedback on permitted areas.

The Long View

SAM's unique design provides flexibility to accomplish long-term results. Our projects are not limited by grant program timelines or permit expiration dates. SAM projects deliver concrete interim and final products, and provide useful information throughout the duration of each individual project.

Our Partners

The Stormwater Work Group (SWG), a formal stakeholder group, defines SAM activities. The Pooled Resources Oversight Committee (PRO-Committee), a subgroup of the SWG, oversees transparency, efficiency, and accountability of SAM expenditures. The Washington State Department of Ecology serves as the administrative entity that manages SAM funds and executes SAM contracts. State and federal agencies provide in-kind leadership and support on projects.

Collectively improving stormwater management

more on back

What is NPDES?

NPDES stands for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. It is the federal Clean Water Act's permitting approach to reduce the impacts of stormwater by requiring local governments, ports, the state department of transportation, and other large public landowners to implement specific practices. In Washington, the State Department of Ecology writes and issues these permits as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's delegated authority.

The permits require:

- Public education, involvement, and participation;
- Active management of stormwater runoff from construction projects and developed areas;
- Operation and maintenance (like sweeping and other cleaning) of roads, ponds, parking lots, catch basins, and other parts of the storm sewer system; and
- Efforts to prevent spills and remove illegal sources of pollution in stormwater.

Want more info? Contact SAMinfo@ecy.wa.gov.