

Focus on: Fee Discount during Innovative Process Testing



Why it matters

High initial costs and uncertainty of success can be barriers for businesses to implement green technology. By reducing fees, we hope this promotes research in using tools that result in water quality benefits of reduced pollution, reduced discharges, and less harmful processes.

Contact information

Charles Gilman
1-800-633-6193 Option 2
wqfee_unit@ecy.wa.gov

**Comment Period—
March 8 to April 30, 2019**

Using our Tools to Spur Innovation

Ecology is considering reducing fees for permittees who want to research and test new manufacturing technologies and processes that reduce pollutants. We've proposed a three-year, 75 percent discount in associated water quality permit fees when innovative projects result in less permit oversight and pollution. The innovations need to result in water quality benefits.

We envision this fee discount could allow facilities in select fee categories to test products and processes in hopes of reducing toxicity and/or turning a waste into a resource.

While we are unable to predict what pollution reduction innovations permittees may pursue, we can help incentivize their efforts by providing this fee discount during the research, development, and testing phases. The goal is a reduction in discharge volumes, frequency, duration, and/or reduced toxicity.

Cutting Edge Technology

Right now, Sustainable Fiber Technologies has a water quality permitted facility in Washington with projects that would likely be eligible for the permit fee discount. In 2015, a Columbia County production facility began producing pulp from wheat and alfalfa using the Phoenix Process. According to the company, this process:

- Requires fewer chemical inputs.
- Discharges significantly less effluent.
- Reduces water intake by about 90 percent.

Compared to traditional pulp and paper mills, this facility has a smaller environmental footprint, fewer water quality impacts, and therefore needs less permit oversight.

Special Accommodations

To request ADA accommodation including materials in a format for the visual impaired, call Ecology at 360-407-5079 or visit: <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>

People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341

Permit Fee Rulemaking Webpage:

<https://ecology.wa.gov/Regulations-Permits/Laws-rules-rulemaking/Rulemaking/WAC-173-224>

Online Comment System:

<http://ws.ecology.commentinput.com/?id=aWJ4f>

We want your feedback

We are [accepting comments](#) on our fee structure, fee discount program, and annual increases until April 30, 2019. We are also looking for feedback about implementing the fee discount program. Since this is a new program, we are gathering information and feedback about how the program will be implemented over the next biennium.

Who can apply?

Facilities eligible for the fee discount would be covered under an individual permit. The facilities will need to demonstrate proof of testing new technology that will significantly reduce or eliminate pollutants or reduce activities that generate pollutants. We will assess facilities on a case by case basis and evaluate if the research and development phase of the new technology results in a reduction in permit oversight.

Why pay fees?

Ecology's water quality permitting program protects state waters by managing when, where, and how stormwater and treated wastewater enters the environment. State law requires Ecology to use permit fees to cover the costs of implementing these important programs. The fees can range from a few hundred dollars to thousands, depending on the type of activity the permit covers. Permit holders receive technical assistance from the state when pollution problems occur.

