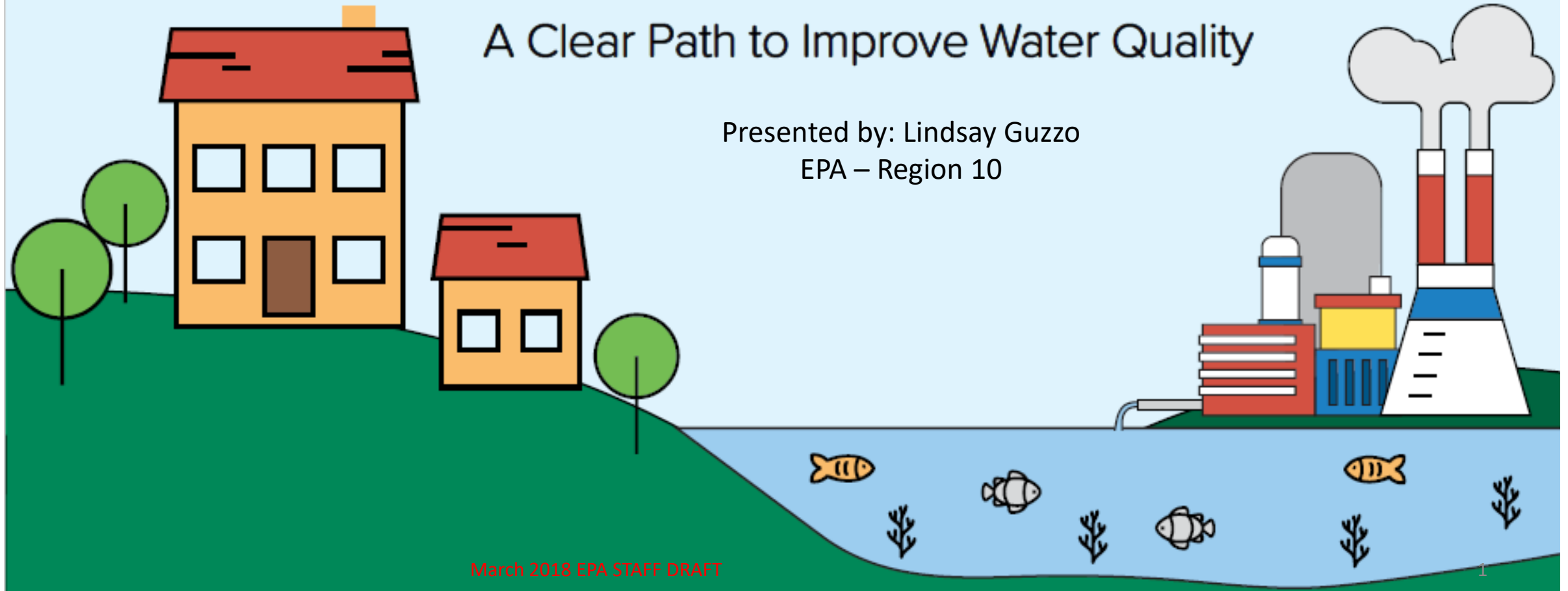


WATER QUALITY STANDARDS VARIANCES

A Clear Path to Improve Water Quality

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EPA – Region 10



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- **This presentation does not:**
 - Impose any binding requirements
 - Determine the obligations of the regulated community
 - Change or substitute for any statutory provision or regulation requirement
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WHAT IS A WATER QUALITY STANDARDS (WQS) VARIANCE?

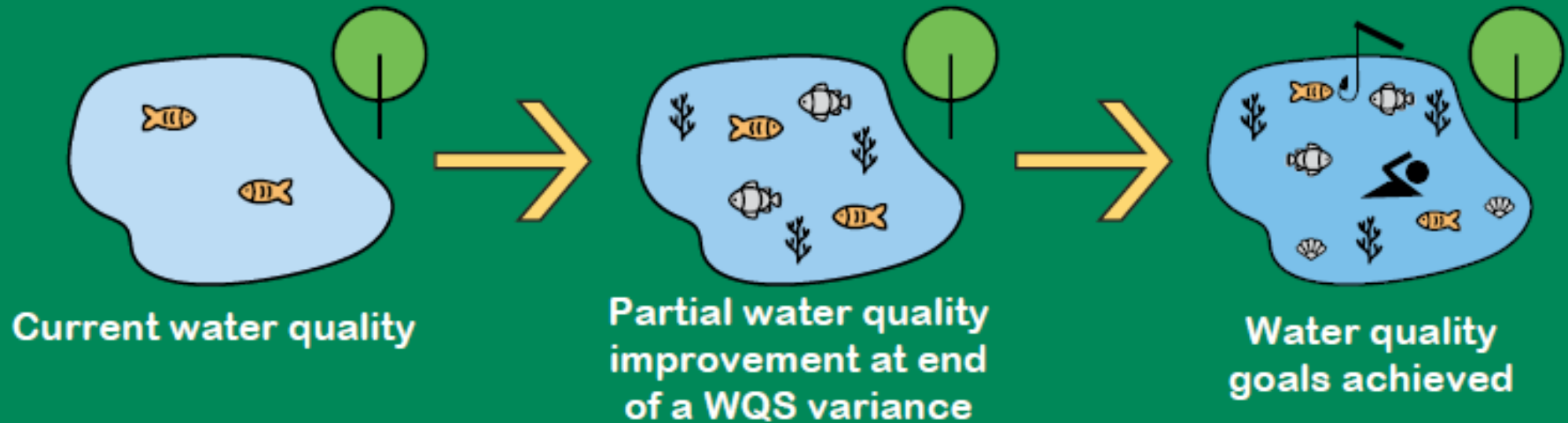


A WQS variance is a path to improve water quality over time. These time-limited WQS strike a balance between providing states/authorized tribes and dischargers the time and flexibility to make water quality improvements, with accountability measures to assure the public that progress will occur.

WHEN CAN A WQS VARIANCE HELP TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY?

A WQS variance can be used when it is uncertain how much progress can be achieved, but it is known that some progress is possible, and states/authorized tribes don't want to give up on working toward water quality improvement.

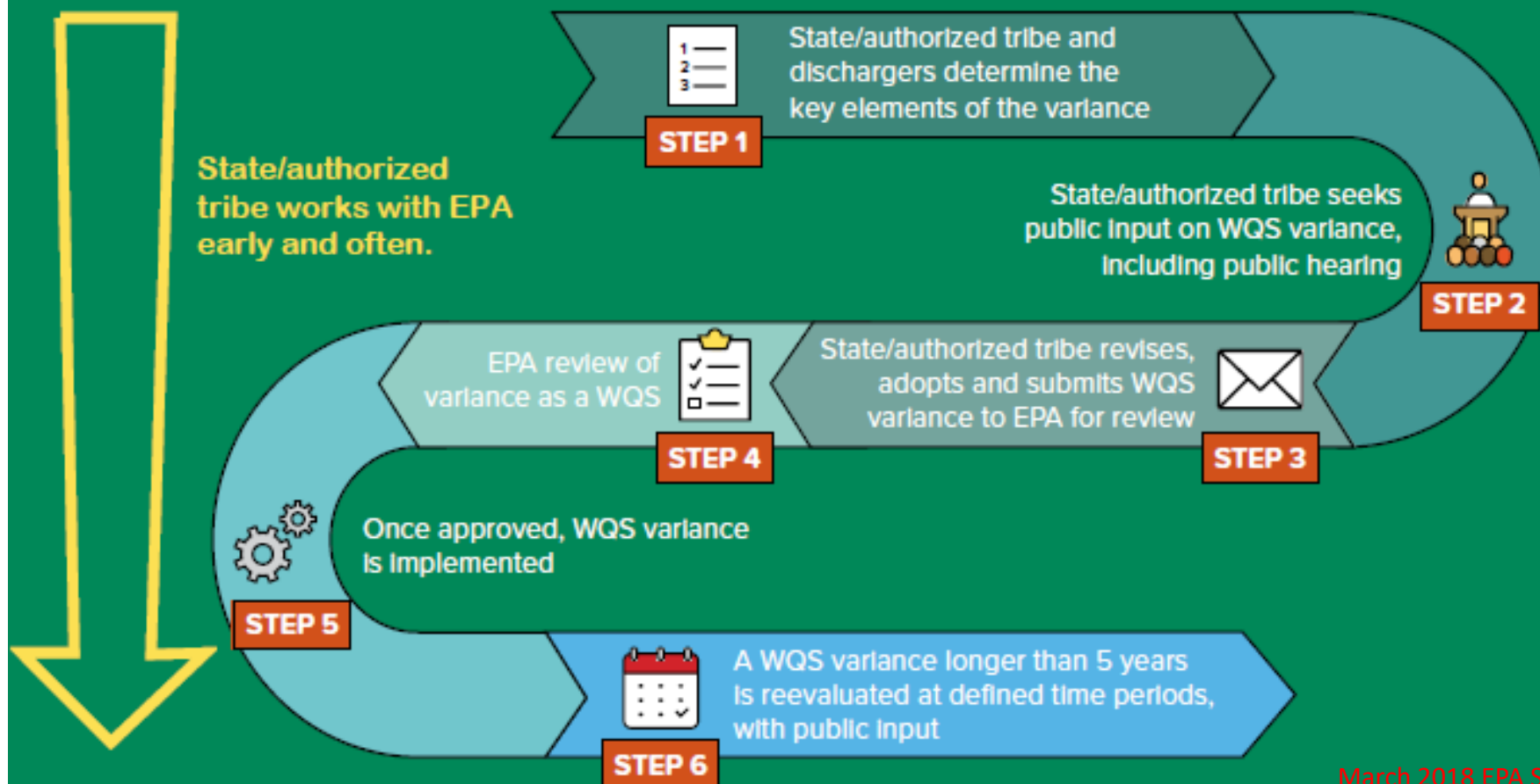
WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS OVER TIME



HOW DOES A WQS VARIANCE WORK?

WQS variances focus on what can be done to improve water quality, not what can't be done.

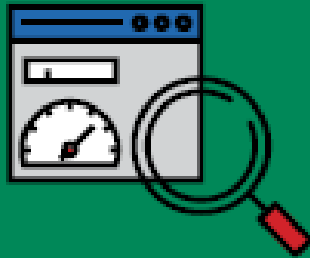
THE WQS VARIANCE PROCESS



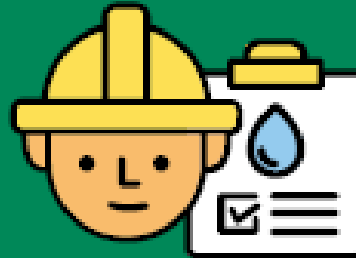
TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED

DETERMINING THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE WQS VARIANCE

State/authorized tribe and dischargers determine the scope of the WQS variance.



Investigate what pollutant control technologies and activities are available and affordable.



Determine how much water quality may improve based on the implementation of these technologies and activities.



Define how long it would take to implement those technologies and activities to make water quality improvements.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?



Talk to your government officials about achieving water quality improvements while balancing competing community resources.




Participate in a WQS public hearing and/or public comment period.




Provide input during WQS variance reevaluation periods.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE WQS VARIANCE TERM IS COMPLETE?


It is time to determine if further water quality improvements can be made.



Can the water quality standards now be met?



Do we need another variance?



Is a permanent change to WQS now appropriate?

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT EPA'S VARIANCE BUILDING TOOL AT:
epa.gov/wqs-tech/water-quality-standards-variance-building-tool



Evaluating Variance Path Viability

- Ecology and EPA will partner in reviewing available information to look at the feasibility of a variance, and what kind of variance would be most appropriate.
- Ecology and EPA will work together to ensure the data needs of a variance can be met.
- EPA will share lessons learned from variances in other Regions to help Ecology determine if a variance in the Spokane is the correct tool to improve water quality

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