

To: WRIA 9 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee

From: Stephanie Potts, Chair of WRIA 9 Committee

Date: September 11, 2020

Re: Review of WRIA 9 Compiled Draft Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan

The WRIA 9 Chair is providing this memo to the WRIA 9 Committee as an update on the Draft WRIA 9 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan and expectations for local entity review of the draft plan. The chair requests committee members review the enclosed draft plan, in coordination with relevant decision makers at their entity, and submit comments to the chair via the Comment Tracker by **Monday, October 19, 2020**. The chair will compile all comments received by this date for discussion with the Committee at the October 27 meeting.

Background and Scope of the Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan

In January 2018, the Legislature passed the Streamflow Restoration law, RCW 90.94, to help restore streamflow levels. Its purpose is to support robust, healthy, and sustainable salmon populations while providing water for homes in rural Washington. The law calls for local watershed planning and project implementation that improve streamflows. The Department of Ecology (Ecology) funds implementation through its competitive grant program.

Specifically, the law directs Ecology to convene Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committees in eight watersheds surrounding Puget Sound. Each of these committees will develop a watershed restoration and enhancement plan (watershed plan). The watershed plan must identify projects that offset the potential impacts future permit-exempt domestic groundwater withdrawals will have on streamflows and provide a net ecological benefit (NEB) to the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA).

All members of the WRIA 9 Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee must approve the watershed plan prior to submitting the plan to Ecology for review. Ecology must complete its review by June 30, 2021. If it meets the requirements of the law and guidance, Ecology will adopt the plan.

Plan Review Process and Timeline

Ecology, the WRIA 9 Committee, and technical consultants have been developing the plan since October 2018. At the February 2020 meeting, WRIA 9 Committee members shared their local entity plan review and approval process. In February 2020, the WRIA 9 Committee also discussed expectations for local entity review and timeline for approval. Based on this information, the WRIA 9 Committee expects to complete the draft plan by the end of November 2020 in order to distribute to local entities for local approval. The law states that all members of the committee must approve the plan prior to adoption. The law also requires that Ecology adopt the watershed plan by June 30, 2021, so Ecology must begin review of approved plans in early 2021.

Committee members are expected to communicate frequently on committee decisions and progress to their decision-making bodies throughout the planning process. This includes thorough review and feedback of materials developed for the plan, such as technical memos and optional sections not required to be part of the plan. Reaching consensus on all plan components will be critical for final plan approval. Only plans approved by all members of the committee will move forward for Ecology review.

Draft Plan Contents

Ecology, in collaboration with the committee, prepared this compiled draft plan for review by committee members. Throughout the planning process, the chair distributed technical memos to the committee for comments and corrections. The technical memos describe the process, methods, and in some cases, the decision for technical components of the plan. Technical memos are included as appendices in the draft plan and summarized in the body of the plan. Chapters 5-7 are still in development with additional content added as decisions are made by the committee. Table 1 provides an overview of each chapter of the watershed plan and current status.

Table 1. WRIA 9 Chapter Overview and Status

Chapter	Overview	Status
1. Plan Overview	Ecology prepared standard language to provide an overview of water law and the streamflow restoration law. Ecology intends for consistency in the chapter 1 language across all eight watershed restoration and enhancement plans.	The committee has reviewed draft Chapter 1 and provided suggested changes. A revised and more complete draft Chapter 1 is included in the compiled plan.
2. Overview of the Watershed	This chapter provides an overview of geography and land uses, the relationship of this plan to other planning processes, and overview of fish presence and limiting factors, geology, hydrogeology, and streamflow.	The committee reviewed draft Chapter 2 and provided suggested changes. A revised draft Chapter 2 that includes additional information on fish presence and limiting factors is included in the compiled plan.
3. Subbasin Delineation	This chapter includes an overview of the method and results for dividing the WRIA into twelve subbasins to allow meaningful analysis of the relationship between new consumptive use and offsets per Ecology guidance for determining Net Ecological Benefit.	The committee reviewed draft Chapter 3 and provided suggested changes. A revised draft Chapter 3 is included in the compiled plan.
4. Growth Projections and Consumptive Use	This chapter provides the projections for new domestic permit exempt well connections and their associated consumptive use for the 20-year planning horizon.	The committee reviewed draft Chapter 4 and provided suggested changes. A revised draft Chapter 4 is included in the compiled plan.
5. Projects and Actions	This chapter addresses projects and actions identified by the committee to offset consumptive use and achieve a net ecological benefit within the WRIA.	The committee has not yet reviewed this chapter. The committee is actively working to finalize the list of projects and actions to offset consumptive use and meet NEB. A draft of Chapter 5 is included in the compiled plan. Please thoroughly review the draft Chapter 5, including project descriptions and offset estimates.
6. Adaptive Management Recommendations	This chapter addresses optional components of the plan that the committee decided to include. Section 6.1 provides recommendations for plan implementation and adaptive management of the plan. As noted in Section 6.2, the Committee discussed policy recommendations but did not reach consensus on including them in the plan.	The committee reviewed and provided comments on draft Chapter 6. Comments are scheduled for discussion at the September committee meeting. Ecology made minor revisions and corrections based on the feedback from the committee. Ecology will make additional revisions following the September committee meeting.
7. NEB Evaluation	The committee has the option to include a net ecological benefit evaluation in the plan.	The committee is still discussing whether to include the optional Net Ecological Benefit evaluation and NEB statement in the watershed plan. An outline of the NEB Chapter is provided for the committee's review.