

Water Quality Update

in the Wenatchee River and its tributaries

Rivers, lakes, and streams in the Wenatchee watershed are used by people in many ways such as irrigating residential lawns and agricultural lands, municipal and business needs, as well as recreational enjoyment and drinking water. These water bodies are also important spawning and rearing areas for many salmonid species, as well as other wildlife. However, pollution threatens the health of the watershed and jeopardizes its many uses.

What is a Water Cleanup Plan?

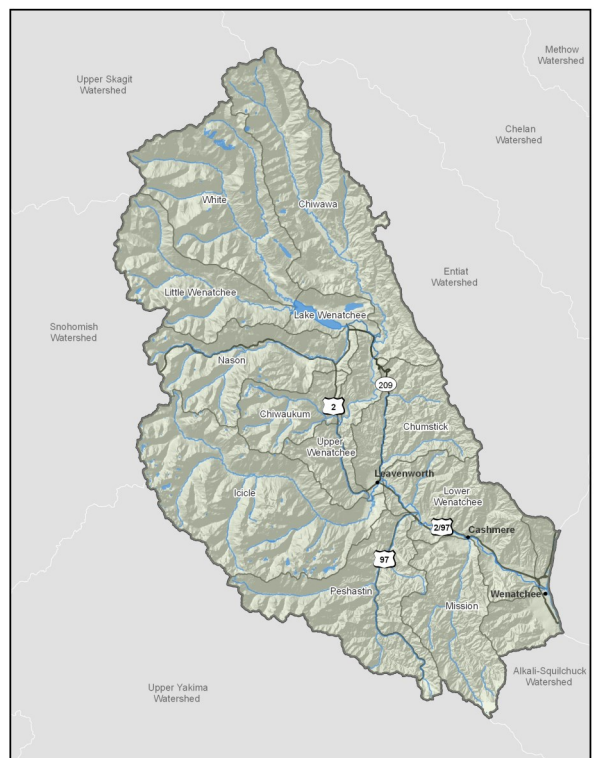
Federal law requires states to identify sources of pollution in waters that fail to meet state water quality standards, and to develop Water Cleanup Plans to address those pollutants. The Water Cleanup Plan, also called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), establishes limits on pollutants that can be discharged to the water body and still allow state standards to be met. Cascadia Conservation District's Wenatchee Watershed Water Quality Improvement Program works to implement this Water Cleanup Plan or TMDL.

Which Wenatchee area water bodies need cleaned up?

Several sections of rivers and streams in the Wenatchee watershed have been found to exceed state standards for water quality. Portions of the Wenatchee River, Mission Creek, Brander Creek, Peshastin Creek, Icicle Creek, Chumstick Creek, Nason Creek, Chiwaukum Creek, and the Little Wenatchee River are all listed water bodies that do not meet standards.

What are the concerns?

Listed pollutants include pesticides such as DDT, fecal coliform, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and pH. Pollutants such as pesticides and fecal coliform are a human health concern. Pesticides, high water temperature, low dissolved oxygen, and extreme pH levels are dangerous for fish and aquatic life.



What is the problem?

There are many activities that can contribute to polluting our waterways. Examples include runoff from residences and farms that use nutrients and pesticides; animals that defecate in or near streams; wastewater treatment plants and fruit processors; timber harvesting, development, failing septic systems, etc.



What is being done about it?

Cascadia Conservation District is addressing the water quality problem by working with private landowners on ways to improve water quality. One avenue is coordinating river cleanup activities. Local watershed associations, landowners, citizens, businesses, and public officials are engaging in cleanup efforts. The Wenatchee watershed TMDLs are being coordinated with other water resources and fish recovery efforts.

Cascadia also offers soil testing and associated technical assistance for nutrient planning for citizens with livestock, agricultural land or residential lawns. Irrigation scheduling on residential lawns and ag lands will reduce the risk of excessive fertilizer application and overwatering, which, if unchecked, can lead to leaching or runoff into area rivers and streams.



Riparian plantings of native trees and shrubs where streamside riparian conditions are degraded or non-existent can improve water quality. As the plantings mature they will help filter out nutrients, wastes and other potential pollutants from runoff, provide effective shade to cool water temperatures, and contribute root strength to slow erosion. The reduced rates of erosion will help decrease DDT and phosphorous loading and help keep stream temperatures cool. Restored riparian areas will also contribute to improved habitat conditions for threatened and endangered fish species.

Pasture health and riparian livestock exclusion fencing are a couple other Best Management Practices that Cascadia CD can assist landowners with to improve the health of the land and improve water quality.

Cascadia offers voluntary programs you can be involved in to address the above topics.

What can I do?

You can help! If you would like to be involved, have a project idea or would like more information about improving water quality in the Wenatchee River Watershed, please contact Sandy Letzing, Cascadia Conservation District, at (509) 436-1601 or email: sandyl@cascadiacd.org