

## Area Governments Receive Permits to Discharge Urban Stormwater

Cowlitz County, Longview, and Kelso have been enlisted to help tackle the largest source of urban water pollution - stormwater runoff.

The EPA's 2002 National Water Quality Inventory found 47% of our nation's surveyed waters to be unfit for basic uses such as fishing or swimming – with most pollution coming from agricultural and municipal runoff.

As of last month, the Washington Department of Ecology began regulating stormwater in well over one hundred small-to-medium sized cities and counties statewide. These jurisdictions fall under the state's new "Phase II" municipal stormwater permit.

Municipal stormwater permits are required by the federal Clean Water Act and are delegated to states to administer. Since the 1970's, regulations have compelled point sources (industry, wastewater plants) to improve their discharges; but the quality of the nation's waters continued to deteriorate. So by the 1990's, regulations were extended to runoff from large municipal storm sewers, large construction sites, and certain industrial activities. Now, discharges from smaller public storm sewers and construction sites are also issued a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

"I am confident that these permits will result in the kind of real environmental progress that can best be implemented by the local governments," said Jay Manning, Director of the Department of Ecology.

The County, Longview, and Kelso must upgrade their stormwater management programs to meet high standards for public outreach and education, public involvement, illicit discharge detection and elimination, development controls, and municipal best management practices.

According to Josh Johnson, Longview's Stormwater Manager, "The impact locally will be manageable. Expect treatment and compliance costs for larger new and re-development projects to increase a bit and for modest increases in the storm utility rate as its role expands."

Longview joined a coalition of 33 government entities in an appeal of the permit to the State's Pollution Control Hearing Board (PCHB). According to Mr. Johnson, "Elements of the appeal are technical and center on liability and some cost issues, not philosophical differences with Ecology. The PCHB has scheduled a hearing for March 16.

Longview, Kelso, and the County plan to work together to avoid duplications of effort where possible, saving some costs. Kelso and Longview each will receive \$75,000 in financial aid from Ecology to begin implementation of the permit program components and for additional staff, equipment, and consultants.