

**WHATCOM COUNTY
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

**Jon Hutchings
Director**



NATURAL RESOURCES

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MEMORANDUM

RECEIVED

OCT 14 2019

TO: The Honorable Jack Louws, County Executive
Honorable Whatcom County Councilmembers

THROUGH: Jon Hutchings, Public Works Director

FROM: Gary Stoyka, Natural Resources Manager
Erika Douglas, Senior Planner

DATE: October 9, 2019

RE: Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) and Shellfish Protection Districts

JACK LOUWS
COUNTY EXECUTIVE
RECEIVED

OCT 14 2019

WHATCOM COUNTY
COUNCIL

An informational presentation will be provided by staff and Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committee members regarding PIC activities, the 2019 fall strategy, and the status of shellfish growing areas.

Background and Purpose

The Whatcom Clean Water Program (WCWP) is a partnership of local, state, tribal, and federal organizations working to reduce fecal bacteria in Whatcom County surface waters and restore shellfish growing areas. The Whatcom County Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) Program is a component of this partnership.

Through coordinated efforts to identify and address varied fecal bacteria source, our community has been successful in improving water quality in many waterways and shellfish growing areas. These efforts have resulted in:

- Reopening 810 acres of shellfish beds in Drayton Harbor in 2016.
- Reopening 129 acres of shellfish beds in Birch Bay in 2018.
- Lifting spring harvest restrictions from shellfish beds in Portage Bay in 2019.
- Meeting water quality standards for fecal bacteria at 45 percent more monitoring stations in 2018 than in 2015.

However, more work remains needed to lift fall harvesting restrictions in Portage Bay and to maintain approved shellfish beds.

This presentation will provide an update on PIC efforts, shellfish growing area status, and the 2019 fall strategy. If you have any questions, please contact Erika at extension 6294.

Attachments

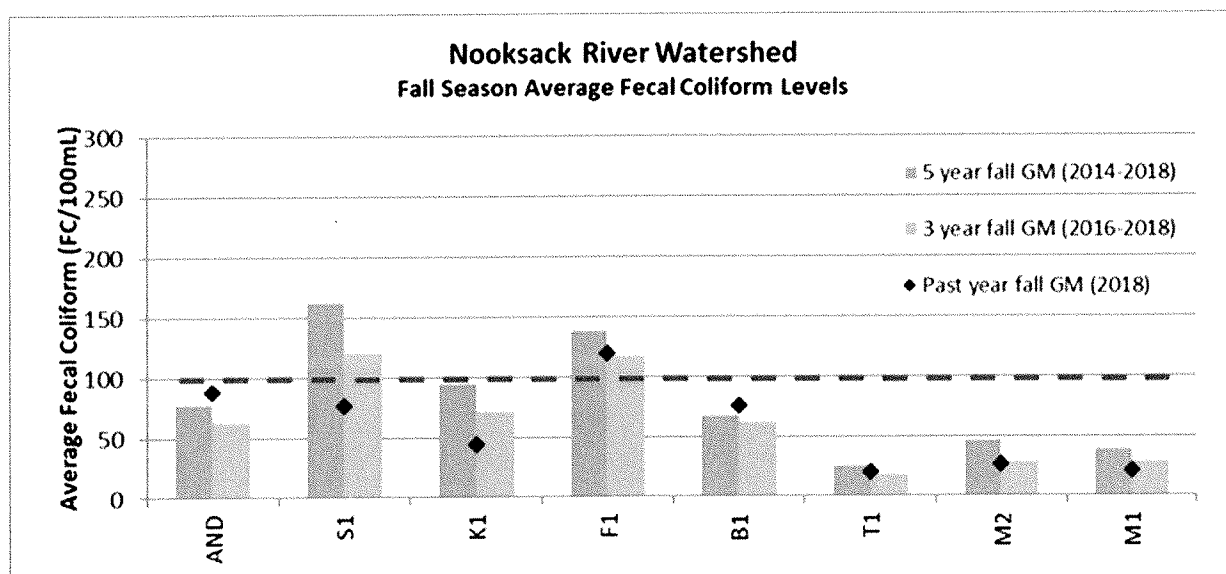
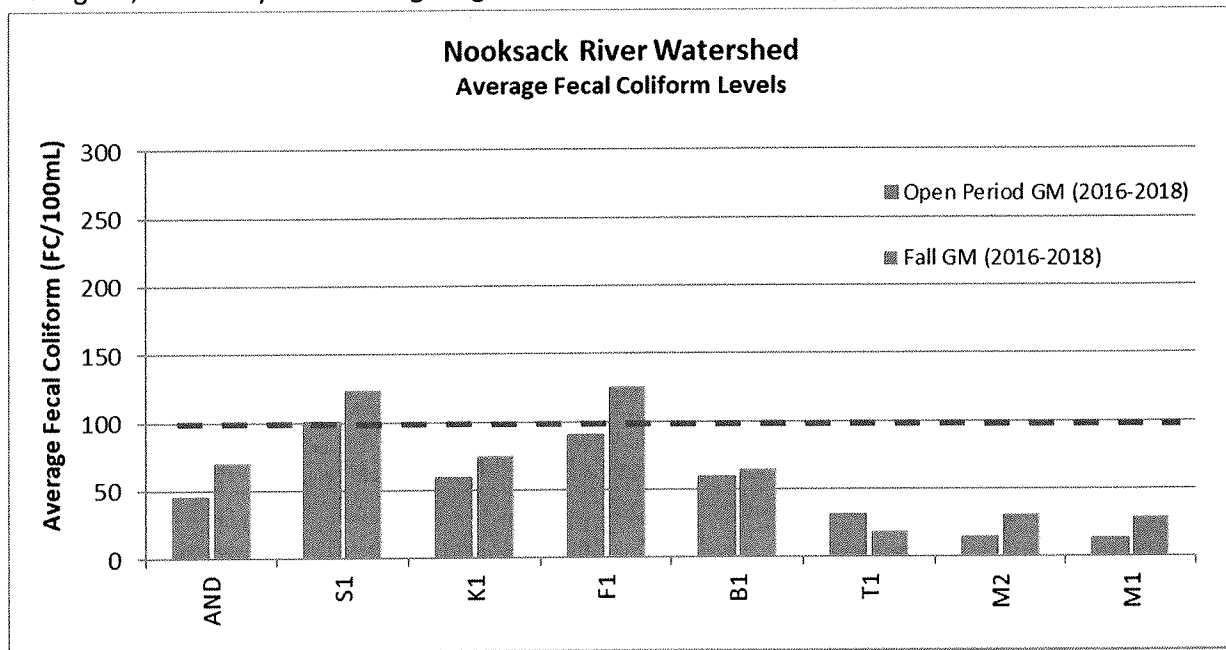
WHATCOM CLEAN WATER PROGRAM FALL 2019 STRATEGY SUMMARY – WORKING DRAFT

Nooksack Watershed/Portage Bay

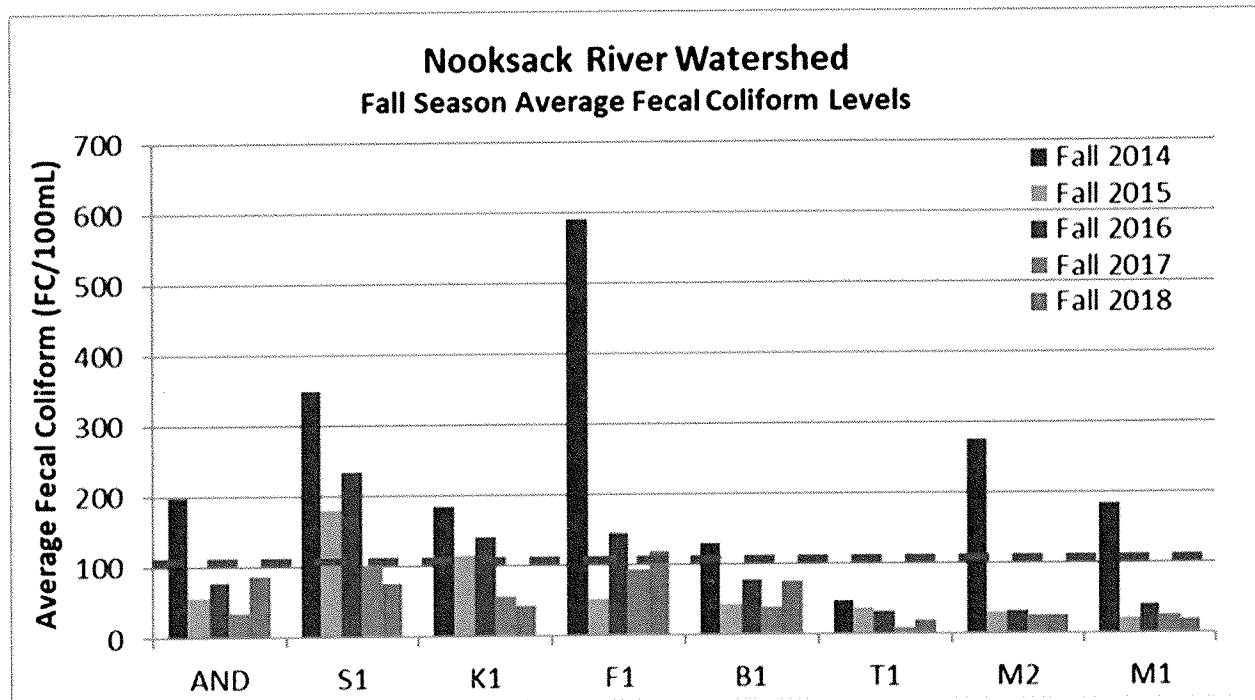
Introduction

For the Nooksack watershed and Portage Bay, data analysis demonstrates overall improvements in bacteria levels (decreasing levels). However, the October through December fall season remains a critical period for protecting water quality. Historic data show we measure elevated bacteria concentrations during the fall season, often during rain events and periods of high flows in the mainstem Nooksack and its tributaries.

During fall, data analysis shows higher geometric means as well as higher 90th percentiles.



Overall, we see water quality improvements during all seasons and when reviewing annual (year-round) averages. Specific to the fall period, we see improvements from 2014 through 2018. However, last fall we had higher bacteria levels than had been seen in the past few years. This was true for Anderson, Fishtrap, and Bertrand creeks.



Fall Strategy Development

Whatcom Clean Water Program (WCWP) partners evaluated tasks and outcomes of the fall 2018 strategy. Based on program review, partners proposed adaptations to address identified gaps and build on experience and compiled data.

This document summarizes a WCWP fall 2019 strategy that partners will carry out to focus and strengthen seasonal Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC) program efforts. This summary highlights adaptations to tasks more fully explained in the fall 2018 strategy. ***Tasks and adaptations added as part of the fall 2019 strategy are in bold and italicized font.***

The fall 2019 strategy focuses on preventing pollution before it happens. Emphasis includes reaching out to landowners before fall rains and before water quality hot spots appear. Partners are prioritizing where to deliver personalized pollution prevention messages based on past contacts, past field condition observations, and hotspot history and status.

Components of the strategy are described as specific to the Nooksack River watershed; however, WCWP partners will apply many of the approaches throughout the county's coastal watersheds (Drayton, Lummi, Birch Bay, Chuckanut) to benefit water quality and shellfish growing areas.

Water Quality Monitoring

The Whatcom Clean Water Program (WCWP) continues to use marine and fresh water monitoring to inform its workplan. Multiple partners coordinate to collect water samples in both the marine and freshwater systems.

Marine water monitoring: The long-term ambient monitoring program in Portage Bay consists of monthly sampling at twelve stations.

Freshwater ambient monitoring: Whatcom County Public Works (WCPW) continues to collect samples at nineteen stations twice per month. WCPW coordinates one of the two sample runs per month to take place the day before Portage Bay marine sampling occurs.

The once-monthly coordinated sampling event includes WCWP partner agencies, watershed improvement districts (WIDs), and citizen groups sampling at additional locations throughout the watershed, including locations at the British Columbia-Washington (BC-WA) border.

- ***BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (ENV): On the coordinated monthly date, ENV staff are monitoring locations within the Canadian portions of the Bertrand and Fishtrap watersheds.***
- ***Additional sites: The fall 2019 strategy incorporates five additional monitoring locations into the once-monthly coordinated sampling event. New monitoring locations include a site in the lower North, Middle, and South forks of the Nooksack River, SW10a (Nooksack River mainstem at Nugents Corner), and at M6 (located on the Nooksack River mainstem at Hwy 9).***

Lummi Natural Resources (LNR) staff will collect a marine sample at station DOH50 in coordination with WCPW's second routine freshwater sampling run each month during the fall.

Storm Event and Source Identification Monitoring: Partners will continue to conduct storm event sampling in fall 2019. Partners schedule time and location(s) for storm event monitoring based on data from routine monitoring, field observations, and weather information. At least once during fall 2019 Lummi Natural Resources staff will collect storm event samples at all on-Reservation sites flowing into Portage Bay.

Data Sharing

WCWP partner agencies will continue to share preliminary water quality sampling results via the online, [interactive water quality maps](#). Partners continue to work with the laboratories and to coordinate with each other to receive laboratory results as soon as possible and to post results to the map. Whatcom Conservation District continues to manage the data map's visualization and usability features.

Analysis and Communication with Washington Department (DOH) of Health Shellfish Growing Area Staff

While the overall goal is to upgrade the entire Portage Bay shellfish growing area to Approved, an interim goal is to shorten the fall season closure period in the Conditionally Approved portion of the growing area. As we focus on preventing pollution during the fall season, analysis and discussion among

WCWP partners will work to characterize conditions in the fall when we measure high bacteria concentrations. Discussions locally will include seeking insight from Watershed Improvement District members, shellfish protection district advisory committee members, and other watershed residents. Whatcom partners want to define critical conditions with the goal of helping support DOH decisions to shorten the fall season shellfish harvest closure period and/or to base the closure period on climatic and watershed conditions.

Field Observations

Goals for fall 2019 include identifying conditions on properties that present water quality concerns and offering those properties information and technical assistance before bacteria enters the surface water system. WSDA, Ecology, and Whatcom County Public Works will ***coordinate scheduling and assignment of driving routes*** along public right-of-way to observe and electronically document conditions in specific geographic areas. ***Better planning windshield surveys will seek to avoid over- or under-coverage of certain areas. Partners will share the windshield survey information through task management software and will incorporate windshield observations into the program's ArcGIS spatial representation platform.***

Several PIC program agencies maintain records of properties or groups of properties where observations and water quality monitoring indicate conditions that may result in bacteria pollution discharge. ***Agency staff are reviewing records and assessing site status; staff will complete the review prior to fall.*** Based on site evaluations and contact status, staff will follow up with landowners as summarized in the "Landowner Contacts" category.

Landowner Contacts

PIC program strategies aim to work voluntarily with landowners through delivering technical and financial help to find and fix preventable fecal bacteria sources polluting surface waters. Fall 2019 PIC program field work will continue to contact landowners with potential fecal bacteria pollution sources related to septic systems or agricultural land use.

- The Environmental Report Tracking System (ERTS) is a statewide system administered by Ecology as a way to record and provide notice about pollution concerns. The ERTS receives complaints from citizens, industry, municipalities, and agency staff. Relevant to the Whatcom PIC program, concerns submitted through ERTS may relate to human sewage or animal waste pollution. An Ecology administrator routes ERTS notices to relevant regulatory agencies. Health, WSDA, Ecology, and Whatcom County Planning & Development Services (PDS) respond to ERTS alerts based on individual agency authority and protocols. Where jurisdiction is clear (i.e. human sewage = Health; dairy related = WSDA), the regulatory agency responds directly. For ERTS complaints related to non-dairy agriculture, Ecology and PDS coordinate to determine who will lead response.
 - ***Egregious violation (in need of immediate fix)*** – If field staff observe a violation in need of immediate fix, relevant field staff will submit a report to the Environmental Report Tracking System (ERTS) to facilitate immediate response by the appropriate regulatory agency. Note that this applies to all preventable fecal bacteria pollution observations

(i.e. septic, dairy, non-dairy). ***While past PIC program protocols have included submitting water quality concerns to the ERTS, the fall 2019 strategy is highlighting the action as a more formal commitment to facilitate prompt regulatory response.***

Septic Systems: The Whatcom County Health Department (Health) will continue to implement the On-Site Sewage System (OSS) Operation and Maintenance Program. Implementation includes Health sending compliance information to OSS owners. Health letters to homeowners note the type of septic system on record, the associated system evaluation requirements, and who to contact for assistance or further information. ***PIC partners will review chronic water quality hot spots for potential OSS concerns. If potential OSS concerns exist, Health will review Report of System Status (ROSS) for properties potentially contributing to the hotspot area. Health will work with PIC partners to prioritize 10 or fewer parcels in the identified hotspot area and will pre-schedule wet season OSS inspections.***

Dairy: WSDA Dairy Nutrient Management Program will continue to lead contact for dairy-related water quality concerns. WSDA staff contact producers through routine inspections, follow up inspections, or in response to water quality sampling results and/or field observations.

Non-Dairy Agriculture: Whatcom County Public Works, Whatcom Conservation District, PDS, and Ecology coordinate to determine which agency will lead communication with a non-dairy agriculture property about bacteria-related water quality concerns. Properties come to the attention of PIC program staff in a variety of ways and several factors influence which agency will lead contact.

To the extent possible, PIC partners strive to support that landowners establish and maintain a consistent relationship with a single agency. Partners generally try to avoid multiple agencies contacting the same landowner. This strategy helps promote consistently communicated expectations. PIC partners determine who will lead contact with the landowner based on history of previous contact and status, urgency of water quality concern, and agency jurisdiction (i.e. potential critical areas ordinance violation or water quality violation).

- **Previous contacts:** A previous contact is a property with a water quality concern who has been contacted within the last three years by either a regulatory agency or by a non-regulatory PIC partner agency. Based on fall strategy review and prioritization of property records described in “Field Observations” and through new field observations, previous contacts may be contacted again.
 - Previous contacts whose last contact is with a regulatory agency or who did not respond to Public Works’ PIC letter series requests to voluntarily address a water quality concern: PIC field staff will refer this category of previous contacts to regulatory agencies (ECY or PDS) for follow up. (See ‘Enforcement Component’ section below.)
 - Previous contacts who did not receive a full PIC letter series AND who did not respond to initial requests from Public Works: PIC field staff will bring this category back into the Public Works’ PIC letter series process. These previous contacts will have a new opportunity to take advantage of non-regulatory education and technical assistance

opportunities. These are properties who Public Works contacted in the past because they appeared to have livestock, but PIC staff could not determine property-specific water quality concerns. Therefore, Public Works did not send the full series of PIC letters. If a water quality concern is noted on a property who is a WCD cooperator, WCD will continue to lead contact with the landowner to address concerns.

- New contacts: New contacts are properties with water quality concerns who have not received PIC letters at all or within the last three years, have not been contacted by a regulatory agency within the last three years, and are not WCD cooperators. To new contacts, Public Works will send the PIC program introduction letter and the first PIC letter. The first PIC letter will request a response within two weeks. PIC letters offer WCD assistance and rebate information. During the two-week response period, regulatory agencies determine jurisdiction and gather documentation. If the two-week deadline passes without landowner response:
 - Non-responsive parcels with site conditions not visible from right-of-way: Public Works will send a second PIC letter requesting that the landowner respond to Public Works or WCD to:
 - 1) indicate they have no livestock and do not use manure,
 - 2) demonstrate they are using BMPs adequate to protect water quality, or
 - 3) request technical assistance from WCD.
 - Non-responsive parcels with observable high pollution risk conditions: Public Works will refer these parcels to ECY and PDS for follow up according to each agency's compliance protocols. (See 'Enforcement Component' section below.)

PIC program methods encourage residents to engage voluntarily in fixing identified pollution sources and preventing potential future pollution. For landowners who choose not to engage with non-regulatory agencies and who do not act on their own to fix identified pollution problems, an effective regulatory backstop component is an important piece of a comprehensive and effective PIC program.

PDS and Ecology are the regulatory agencies responsible for carrying out the enforcement component for non-dairy agriculture properties. Both the 'previous contacts' and 'new contacts' categories above note a set of residents/landowners who choose not to respond to non-regulatory agency contact attempts and who do not act to fix identified violations of land use code and/or water quality law. Though important year-round, ***this fall strategy emphasizes support for a firm regulatory backstop to bring properties into compliance with land use and water quality protection statutes.***

- PDS – PDS PIC program staff receive referrals from partner agencies for properties that appear to have an observable violation of Whatcom County Code (WCC) 16.16 (Critical Areas Ordinance) and whose landowners did not respond to contact attempts by non-regulatory agencies. Related to the PIC program, PDS's compliance protocols generally begin with reviewing site information, contact history, and site conditions; determining if there is a violation of WCC 16.16; and contacting the landowner if there is a violation.
 - Outreach letter – In instances where PDS has not previously contacted the landowner and the violation is not egregious, PDS will send an outreach letter

describing observed conditions, date of observations, how the conditions appear to violate the resource protection requirements of WCC 16.16, clear options for how to comply, instructions for communicating how the landowner will choose to comply, and a deadline for response. Response or non-response to the outreach letter determines next steps (compliance achieved or Notice of Violation).

- Notice of Violation (NOV) – In instances where PDS has previously contacted the landowner or if the violation is egregious, PDS will send an NOV via certified mail to the landowner or post the NOV on site. The NOV contains relevant property identification information, staff observations, evidence of the presence of critical areas or critical area buffers, citation of code that has been violated, required corrective actions, a timeline for expected action, information sources, and information on how to communicate with PDS.
- Ecology – Ecology’s Water Quality Program staff take the lead on sites whose water quality concerns have not been resolved through the non-regulatory PIC program process. These properties do not have an identifiable violation of WCC 16.16, but have an observable violation or high potential to violate water quality law (RCW 90.48 Water Pollution Control). The sites may have some or all of the following features:
 - Source(s) of pollution is/are identified
 - Surface water is present in proximity to the site
 - A pathway exists for pollution to travel from the pollution source to the surface water
 - Visible and/or measureable (water quality data) site conditions provide evidence of livestock related water quality impacts, or constitute a high risk of future water quality impacts
 - Management practices are not in place or are not sufficient to prevent fecal bacteria pollution to state waters
- Ecology’s compliance procedures will be guided by, and consistent with, Ecology’s Nonpoint Compliance Desk Book:
 - Ecology will first send a technical assistance letter including:
 - Observed conditions and supporting evidence of a pollution problem
 - Explanation of how observed conditions impact local water quality
 - Site information including connectivity to surface water and impacts to local waterways, severity of the problem, and any history of past interactions with Ecology or other agencies
 - Clear options for resolving the issue(s)
 - Requested timeline for response
 - If the landowner does not respond, or responds but refuses to make changes sufficient to protect water quality, local Ecology staff can recommend the property receive a Warning Letter. The decision to issue a Warning Letter depends on the severity of the problem, site history, and approval by Ecology Water Quality Program Management Team.

- Warning letters may serve as notice that Ecology staff has observed a discharge violation of water quality statute (RCW 90.48), and that failure to address the problem could result in further enforcement action. Alternatively, the letter may note that staff has observed conditions that pose a risk of a discharge violation, and that they will return to assess the conditions later, typically during the rainy season.
- If a warning letter does not result in positive action, Ecology may consider issuing a Notice of Violation, or an Administrative Order. Where all other efforts to achieve compliance have failed, a Notice of Penalty may be considered.

Enforcement Component

Stakeholders engaged in efforts to recover year-round harvest throughout the Portage Bay shellfish growing area support fair, firm, and consistent application of regulatory backstop procedures. In particular, stakeholders support regulatory agencies in carrying out compliance actions for cases where violators have continued to pollute and have not engaged in resolving identified issues. Without compliance action follow through, these cases will continue to hamper efforts toward reaching and maintaining the goal that so many are working hard to achieve.

Tracking Contacts and Progress

PIC program partners work consistently to coordinate information about field conditions, agency contact with landowners, and parcel status. The coordination goal promotes efficiency, seeks to minimize instances where a landowner is contacted by multiple agencies, and helps support that a landowner receives clear and consistent guidance. PIC program partners continue to use task management software to share current lead agency, identified problem, and status.

Transboundary Work

Partners in British Columbia (BC) and Washington (WA) completed in late July 2019 the first annual report summarizing activities related to the BC/WA Nooksack River Transboundary Technical Collaboration Group. PIC program partners communicated and coordinated with BC partners throughout fall 2018 and will continue to work with BC staff throughout the fall 2019 season as monitoring takes place at the border and in the Canadian portion of the Nooksack River watershed.

Communications and Community Outreach

PIC program outreach and communication methods and venues have continued to build and adapt, resulting in more people connecting with clean water related messaging. Since 2015, Whatcom County and WCD has tracked increased numbers of voluntary requests for farm plans, consistent participation in and demand for homeowner septic system education classes, and participation in financial incentive programs.

To reach fall season water quality goals, community members must act before and during the wet season. PIC program partners will continue delivering messages through social media, newsletters, and events. Continued general outreach and messaging methods and opportunities include:

- Run with the Chums; co-hosted by WCD with opportunities for information booths; **Sept 14, 2019**
- SeaFeast; multiple PIC partners participate to host booths offering clean water information and activities; **Sept 21, 2019**
- PIC newsletters and e-newsletters; WCPW
- WSDA Story Map (updated weekly)
- Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS) PIC staff contribute to the Natural Resources Newsletter with broad distribution to rural landowners
- Facebook and Next Door posts about domestic pets and urban wildlife fecal pollution sources and solutions

Specific audiences include owners and managers of agricultural properties, septic systems, and pets.

Agricultural Audience: WCD staff continue to lead and deliver outreach materials and events for agricultural topics. Past messages to prepare for the fall season will continue with wet season preparation postcards, e-newsletters, radio advertisement and interviews, social media posts, personalized invitations to events, and continued support to cooperators seeking information and assistance opportunities. Fall 2019 messages will include:

- ***Proactive approaches to communication, with reminder messages timed appropriately to assist farmers with management tasks.***
- ***Farm planners connecting with previous contacts to encourage completion of structural BMPs during the dry season.***
- ***Later summer messages to remind livestock managers to move animals in a timely way from pastures that will become saturated and/or that will flood.***
- ***Developing and sharing landowner spotlights with personal quotes and photo(s) supporting the seasonal messaging.***

Other WCWP partners will supplement and complement WCD outreach efforts:

- WSDA continues to host and maintain an online, interactive Story Map highlighting educational opportunities, water quality BMPs, the WCD manure spreader, and rebate and cost-share programs.
- WSDA staff will contact dairy producers prior to fall with reminders about preparing for the wet season.
- PDS will send farm plan inspection notices to Conservation Program on Agricultural Lands (CPAL) participants in the Nooksack watershed who have not completed an inspection in the past two years. PDS will send notices will in October and November with the expectation that inspections will take place within 30 days of receipt. ***PDS will prioritize which sites to send fall 2019 notices to based on record review and partner input.***
- ***Ecology will send a bacteria pollution prevention related postcard to livestock owners.***

Septic System Audience: Whatcom County Health and Public Works continue to deliver an “evaluate before it’s too late” campaign. Health continues to host homeowner septic system training opportunities, with ***trainings in September and October 2019 already scheduled***. Attendees become certified to inspect their own septic systems and become eligible to apply for rebates related to qualifying septic system evaluation or maintenance work. ***Public Works staff will work with County Health to promote “SepticSmart Week 2019” during September 16-20, 2019.*** (SepticSmart coincides with Whatcom Waterweek September 14-22, 2019.)

Pet Owner Audience: WCPW began a pet waste campaign in early 2019. The “scoop it, bag it, trash it” and “there is no poop fairy” message is being delivered through signs in parks and through social media. Personal contacts through handing out dog waste bag kits in county parks has resulted in productive conversations and potentially greater awareness to motivate proper dog waste disposal behavior. ***Public Works outreach staff plan additional fall 2019 events related to “poop fairy” appearances. Prioritizing where the poop fairy will appear will be based on results of the spring pilot project. Public works staff will coordinate delivery of proper dog waste disposal messages during the September 2019 Water Weeks. Messages will be delivered through radio ads and social media.***

Are You Ready For Fall?

It is time to prepare for the wet season

Picture that old, dry sponge that has been stored under your sink for a few months. It doesn't want to soak up water right away, does it? After months of dry summer weather our **soils act in a similar way during the fall.**

After a long, dry period much of the rain can't soak into the soil. It runs over top of the land into ditches and creeks. During that dry period, pollutants (such as fecal bacteria from livestock, dogs, or wildlife), will build up on the land. When fall rains come, water picks up the pollutants and carries them into our ditches and creeks.

From these ditches and creeks, bacteria is carried downstream into our bays and harbors. Too much bacteria closes beaches to swimming and shellfish harvest. In fact, from October through December, Portage Bay (at the base of the Nooksack River) is closed to shellfish harvest each year. **With your help, our community is working to change that!**

Many of your neighbors are already taking steps to reduce compaction and mud, improve animal health, and/or avoid high costs of replacing a septic system- all the while, protecting our community's creeks and beaches. If you are one of those neighbors, thank you! If you are looking for some ideas, we've got you covered below.

Tips for Farms

It's time to prepare for the rainy season. Consider places on your farm, where pastures stay wet or flood, where gutters overflow (or just don't exist), and where you plan to have your animals overwinter. These fall tips will help get your farm ready for the WET season!

Pastures

- Avoid overgrazing as grass growth slows in August through October. Overgrazing can lead to compaction, which increases runoff, and a lack of surface cover which slows down water for infiltration and captures pollutants.
- Make plans to move animals from pastures that become saturated in the fall and winter. Animals on wet fields can compact the soils and damage pastures.
- Follow appropriate seasonal manure application setback guidelines for pasturing animals. Just like manure spreading equipment, animals are applying manure to your fields. Check and follow the setback distances that apply to you (e.g. manure application setbacks, Critical Areas Ordinance, or Department of Ecology exclusion). The Whatcom Conservation District can help you determine the appropriate setbacks.

Barn Gutters

- Check and repair roof panels, gutters, and downspouts or install barn gutters if you don't have them. Diverting roof water away from heavy use or manured areas can improve animal health and protect surface water.



* Note: Poop may also enter the water from direct discharging or dumping.

Heavy Use Areas

- Make sure your sacrifice, or heavy use, areas are ready for animals. Order and install hog fuel, wood chips, or other footing materials. that will reduce mud and protect footing.
- Consider where your heavy use area drains. Runoff is best treated through a grassed or vegetated area.



Attending a Farm Speaker Series Workshop is the first step towards your \$200 rebate for barn gutters or heavy use area footing. Check <https://www.whatcomcd.org/speaker-series> for more information.

Nutrient Applications

- Get your manure out on the fields early. Be sure your manure pile has been spread or your lagoon is empty in early October when field and weather is lower risk. Check with the Whatcom Conservation District's Manure Spreading Advisory and inquire about borrowing their manure spreader.
- Follow seasonal manure application setback guidelines. In September, the setback is **40 feet** from all waterways and swales. The setback moves to **80 feet** from October through the high risk winter months.
- Apply at agronomic rates. Grass doesn't need many nutrients going into the winter and cover crops likely don't need any when planted behind an annual crop . Contact the Whatcom Conservation District for a soil test.
- Sign up for manure text alerts to get notices of significant weather events and manure application tips. Text "EZManure" to 797979.
- Cover manure storage or compost system. As the rains begin, cover your manure pile with a tarp or roof structure. This preserves your hard-earned nutrients and reduces runoff from your farm. Contact the Whatcom Conservation District for a free tarp.

Cover Crops

- Plant your cover crop as soon as annual crops are harvested. Cover crops reduce nutrient and sediment transport through fall and winter months.

Fall is the perfect time to get your farm winter ready and Whatcom Conservation District can help. Whatcom Conservation District is the resource in Whatcom County for information on rebates and grants for farm improvements, technical assistance, and an equipment loan program. Additionally, they provide complementary soil tests and tarps for manure piles. Attending a Farm Speaker Series Workshop is the first step towards your \$200 rebate for barn gutters or heavy use area footing.

For more information about Whatcom Conservation District programs, visit <https://www.whatcomcd.org/> or call (360) 526-2381.

Tips for Pet Waste

Pets do not use a toilet or pick up after themselves. Besides being gross to step in, bacteria from pet waste left on trails, lawns, and even the woods can wash into stormdrains, ditches, and creeks when the rain comes.. Like human poop, pet poop is raw sewage that contains pathogens such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites which can transmit disease to people. Some of these pathogens can last for years in the environment or your backyard.

- Scoop, Bag, and Trash it!
- Become a steward, install a sign, and share bags with others.

For more information about pet waste programs, visit www.whatcomcounty.us/scooppoop or call Whatcom County Public Works at (360) 778-6230.

Tips for Septic Systems

Regular evaluations and maintenance of your septic system can help you find problems early on and avoid large costs associated with repairs. Each septic system is designed to process a specific amount of wastewater each day. When too much water goes through your system in a short period of time the solids in the wastewater don't have enough time to settle in the tank. The solids make their way into the drainfield and can eventually cause you expensive problems. Here are some specific tips that will help keep excess water out of your septic system and protect your property.

- Repair leaking toilet flappers. A worn out toilet flapper can allow water to leak from the toilet tank to the toilet bowl. These leaks often go unnoticed and could send hundreds of gallons of additional water through your septic system each day. It's cheap and quick to fix! Tips to locate and repair a leaking toilet flapper can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week>.
- Divert runoff/downspouts. Divert water away from your septic system, including your drainfield. Check that gutters and downspouts are in place and direct water away from these areas. Drainfields typically fail because too much water, entering from the house, an outside source or both, has been flushed into them, keeping them constantly saturated. A drainfield that is failing is no longer treating sewage properly and must be replaced.
- Spread out the timing of your laundry loads. Try to do laundry throughout the week and avoid 'laundry catch up days'. Modern high-efficiency washing machines can use between 10 and 20 gallons of water per load. Older top loading washing machines can use up to 40 gallons per load. Washing 5 loads of laundry in one day could send more than 200 gallons of water through your septic system.



For more information about septic systems, visit www.whatcomcounty.us/septic or call the Whatcom County Health Department at (360) 778-6000. For rebate information, visit www.co.whatcom.wa.us/2257/Septic-Maintenance-Rebate-Program.

Tips for Boats and Recreational Vehicles

If you are returning from your last summer trip or thinking about getting an early start on winterizing, remember to use a pump out station. Discharging black or gray water onto a field, into a stormdrain, or into a waterway is not a solution! Protect your family, neighbors, and waterways and make use of the sanitary disposal options below:

- Pumpout Stations for Boats: <https://pumpoutwashington.org/>
- Department of Transportation links to dump stations for RVs <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/travel/safety/rest-areas/rv-dump-stations>

Tips for Wildlife

Larger than natural populations of wildlife, such as raccoons, can be a source of bacteria in creeks. When people make food and shelter easily accessible to wildlife, animals can increase their populations above natural levels.

- Do not feed wildlife. Secure pet food, garbage, and compost from wildlife.
- Block off crawl spaces and attic vents from wildlife access.

For more information about wildlife, visit <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/2916/I-See-Urban-Wildlife>.



The Whatcom Clean Water Program is a partnership of local, state, tribal and federal organizations working to reduce fecal bacteria in Whatcom County surface waters and restore shellfish growing areas. Learn more about this [partnership](#).