

## Advisory Groups

for  
**Water Quality  
Improvement  
Projects**  
also known as  
Total Maximum  
Daily Loads  
(TMDLs)



“Individuals from the watershed community contribute personal interests, concerns, hopes and dreams for the watershed they live in. They have unique experiences, insight, relationships, and stories that can be employed to help make their watershed a better place for current and future generations.”  
- Emmett Fiske  
Creating Effective Groups to Address Pressing Local Problems

### What is a water quality improvement project?

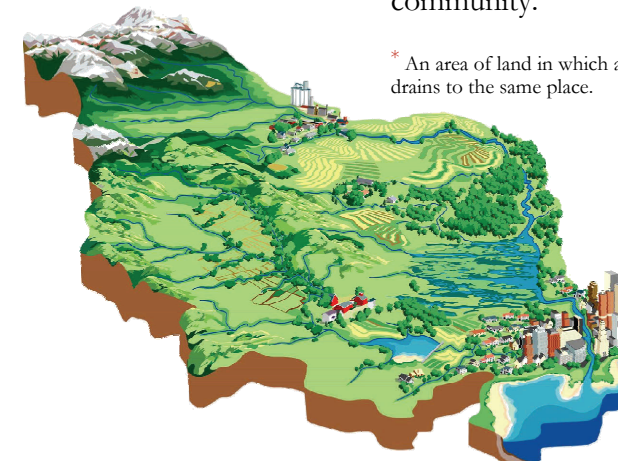
The terms Water Quality Improvement Project, Water Cleanup Plan, and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) are all used to describe the same thing – a process to get to clean water. These projects include:

- ◆ Studies that describe the type, amount, and sources of pollution.
- ◆ Amounts that the pollution needs to be reduced to meet water quality standards.
- ◆ Targets and recommendations to control the pollution.
- ◆ Strategies created with local organizations and citizens to ensure cool, clean water.

### What is an advisory group?

An advisory group is made up of people representing a full range of interests in the watershed\*, brought together to help Ecology develop a Water Quality Improvement Plan (or TMDL). Experience has shown that smaller groups, with no more than one person from each interest group, function more effectively. Although decisions about the content of the TMDL remain Ecology’s responsibility, group recommendations can influence the focus and direction of the TMDL study and implementation plan. The group should promote education, encourage detailed discussions of issues, and allow informal dialogue between all participants and with the local community.

\* An area of land in which all the water in and on the land all drains to the same place.



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## Why is your advice important to Ecology?

Having citizens and local governments involved is the best way to ensure that the water quality improvement plan considers local knowledge and interests and identifies future actions to improve water quality. Local input helps tailor the TMDL to the specific environmental, economic, and social conditions in a given watershed. By working together to produce the TMDL and identify solutions, citizens in the watershed come to actively support the TMDL and have a stake in its successful implementation. It is important to note that Ecology is not required to convene an advisory group for water quality improvement projects, but prefers to do so for the previously listed reasons.

"There began to be a feeling of common interest... And it's the typical results, 3 years of sitting around the table and all these people become friends, and understand each others problems, and produce this great plan."

- Lyn Muench,  
Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe  
Dungeness River Management Team

## What are the roles and responsibilities of being an advisory group member?

Developing a TMDL is a multi-year process.

Meeting commitments vary over that time period

depending on each

situation and the

advisory group's goals

and structure. Before

committing to being on

an advisory group, it is

important to understand

what you might be

asked to do. The following list gives some

examples of what might be required:

- ◆ Cooperatively set, and work within, advisory group procedures and ground rules.
- ◆ Advise and make recommendations to Ecology on local watershed options and solutions.
- ◆ Communicate honestly and openly.
- ◆ Seek results that everyone can live with.
- ◆ Share water quality information with both your interest group and with the community.
- ◆ Review, edit and provide comments on draft documents.
- ◆ Advise and give ideas on strategies for public participation and education.
- ◆ Attend scheduled meetings and catch up on meeting notes and outcomes if you can't attend a meeting.



The advisory group's involvement is

important to ensure water quality is maintained,

or continues to improve over time. Advisory

groups can work with citizens in their own

communities to support actions that are working

and to look for alternate strategies where needed.

## What are the roles and responsibilities of the Ecology staff I'll be working with?

TMDLs are a requirement under the federal

Clean Water Act. In Washington State, the

Department of Ecology is responsible for

developing TMDLs. Therefore, Ecology staff

working on TMDLs should:

- ◆ Act as the main authority and decision maker for TMDLs (required by Clean Water Act).
- ◆ Strive to meet water quality standards to provide for beneficial uses of waters for the citizens of Washington State.
- ◆ Explain and apply science.
- ◆ Communicate honestly and openly .
- ◆ Cooperatively set, and work within, advisory group procedures and ground rules.
- ◆ Draft and publish the documents.
- ◆ Conduct a public comment period and respond to comments.

## Sample ground rules for advisory groups:

- ◆ Maintain respect for the group and individuals within it.
- ◆ Create an atmosphere for effective consideration of options.
- ◆ Support the primary purposes of the group.
- ◆ Maintain focus on issues, not individuals.
- ◆ Recognize the value of presenting different ideas and perspectives.
- ◆ Provide an opportunity for each person to talk.
- ◆ Give full attention to the person who is speaking.
- ◆ Reserve side discussions for breaks or after meetings.
- ◆ State needs, problems and opportunities, not positions.
- ◆ Send a representative if you can't make the meeting.
- ◆ Give the same priority to solving the problems of others, as you would your own.

Working together  
for clean water!