



# WATER for PEOPLE, FARMS & FISH

## Overview of the Quilcene-Snow Water Resources Management Program (WAC 173-517)

*Note: This overview summarizes Ecology’s proposal for the Quilcene-Snow watershed rule. Your comments on this proposal are welcomed. The actual rule is still under development.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Quilcene-Snow watershed is facing increasing water demand for new residents and local agriculture. Streams in the watershed have chronic low flows in the late summer and early fall. Increases in water use can affect already threatened salmon and other fish and wildlife that depend on adequate water. After many years of working closely with local and state governments and this community, Ecology is proposing to adopt a rule that will help manage water to meet the current and future needs of people, farms and fish.

The proposed rule would:

- Protect existing water rights
- Protect existing well users
- Support existing agriculture
- Protect fish resources
- Allow rainwater collection
- Manage new uses of water

The proposed rule would include the whole watershed except for a small portion in Clallam County around Sequim Bay, which will be addressed in rule at a later date.

### HOW THE PROPOSED RULE MAY AFFECT NEW WATER USERS

It’s important to know that the proposed rule would only affect those who apply for new water rights or drill a new well *after* the rule is adopted. If you already have a water right or well, or are served by a public water supplier – the rule won’t impact your use.

Those looking for new water supplies would be required to hook-up to a public water system if available. Water is available for home builders to drill new wells, but to stretch supplies your water use would be required to follow specific conservation standards (see page 2). Because of the specific water challenges in the Chimacum sub-basin, conservation standards would be stricter as local leaders work to develop alternative water supplies. (see page 2).

For those drilling new wells, your water use would be measured. Installing a meter provides information on actual amounts of water used. It is not used to charge fees for water use. Ecology does not have the authority to charge for water.

In major sub-basins, water would be reserved for new uses. (See page 3.) Each reserve would be a finite amount of water, supplying a certain number of households. Local communities and leaders must begin now to pursue creative storage and other water supply projects to ensure continued water availability, once all the reserve water is spoken for.

# ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSED RULE

The proposed rule includes six key elements:

- Guiding the issuance of new water rights.
- Specifying water use conservation standards for new uses in the entire watershed.
- Setting conditions for new water uses in designated coastal areas.
- Establishing reserves of water for new uses.
- Establishing instream flows on 13 streams.
- Closing streams and tributaries to new uses, with some exceptions.

## FUTURE WATER RIGHTS

New state-issued water rights may be available under certain conditions, including:

- The use would not affect instream flows or closures.
- The potential user has submitted and received approval for a mitigation plan.
- The use is non-consumptive (does not diminish the water in the source, such as a heat pump).

The rule would also allow rooftop rainwater collection provided all the water is used on-site.

## CONSERVATION STANDARDS

*The conservation standards proposed for permit-exempt well use throughout WRIA 17 are intended to stretch out-of-stream supplies while protecting instream resources.*

New permit-exempt well use would not be allowed if a user can hook up to a public water system.

The conservation standard for new permit-exempt well uses in all reserves - except Chimacum\* - would be:

- New individual permit-exempt well uses, typically single-family homes: Maximum of 500 gallons per day (gpd) and an average of 350 gpd.
- Measuring water use on all new withdrawals.
- New group domestic: Maximum of 500 gpd and an average of 350 gpd per residence; with a combined total for all residences not to exceed 5,000 gpd.

*In the state Ground Water Code, the "ground water permit exemption" (RCW 90.44.050) allows for certain amounts and uses of ground water without obtaining a permit from Ecology. While exempt from the permitting process, these withdrawals are still subject to all other state water laws.*

### *\*Chimacum Creek Sub-basin – indoor use conservation standard*

Water availability is especially challenging in the Chimacum sub-basin because of population growth, a large unused water right, and the community's investment in restoration and preservation of fish habitat. Therefore, reserve water use from Chimacum sub-basin will be limited to **indoor use only**. New permit exempt well users may be able to use water outdoors when an alternative water supply is available. Local officials need to focus attention on this challenge and continue working with Ecology to develop strategies to provide water for new uses, including agriculture.



Aerial photo of Oak Bay Park

## DESIGNATED COASTAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

*Designated coastal management areas are areas where permit-exempt well use would be managed through the conservation standards, to protect surface water resources and existing water rights, and to minimize the potential for seawater intrusion.*

In areas bordering salt water (refer to map, page 5), there are many small independent streams and drainages. These areas would be protected by managing ground water through the use of the *conservation standards* (see left).

In the Miller Peninsula, Quimper Peninsula and Oak Bay management areas, an expanded permit-exempt well use of up to 5,000 gallons per day would be allowed for commercial agriculture, with some conditions.

Permit-exempt well uses in a designated coastal management area would not be subject to closures.



Big Quilcene River

## RESERVES OF WATER FOR NEW USES

*Water reserves are finite amounts of water set aside for specific new uses. These uses may continue even when stream flows fall below the instream flow levels to be set in this rule.*

*Reserves usually have conditions of use that must be met to access them.*

The proposed rule would create small, limited reserves of water for each stream sub-basin with an associated instream flow. (See the reserve management areas on map, page 5) The reserves vary considerably in size, depending on the size of the stream. The reserve amounts were determined by careful data review, weighing requirements for fish habitat and the needs of a growing population.

The reserves would continue to make water available for new uses in each sub-basin. However, the reserves are finite. When the reserves are fully allocated, that is, all the water has been “spoken for,” new water management guidelines will take effect. New users would then need to offset the impacts of their water use (“mitigate”) or rely on alternative sources of water. Ecology is committed to working with local officials to develop alternative water supplies before the reserves are exhausted.

Water from the reserves would not be affected by instream flow levels or closures (which are discussed below). However, uses would still be subject to state laws: for example, uses cannot impair existing legal water users. In addition, the conservation standards described above would apply to new permit-exempt ground water uses from the reserves.

The Big Quilcene River has the single largest reserve. Public water suppliers may apply for a water right from this reserve.

## INSTREAM FLOWS

*The term “stream flow” is used to describe the actual amount of water flowing in a stream or river. “Instream flow” refers to stream flow amounts set in a rule that will protect and preserve instream resources and uses, including wildlife, fish, recreation, navigation, aesthetics, water quality and livestock watering.*

An instream flow rule establishes a water right for a stream. The proposed rule would set instream flows for 13 major streams (refer to table, page 6). For each of the 13 streams, the rule would specify instream flow amounts for specific times throughout the year, following seasonal variations. Instream flows are set at amounts that will protect instream resources, as required by state law. Setting instream flows helps protect streams by limiting new withdrawals. It does not put water back into streams.

It is not practical to set flows on very small streams, so the rule would rely on the *conservation standards* to protect them.



Spawned Salmon

## CLOSURES AND EXCEPTIONS TO THE CLOSURES

*“Closure” refers to closing a specified water body to new uses. Closures protect streams, as well as existing water users, from being affected by new water users.*

In crafting an instream flow/water management rule, Ecology must consider both long-term and short-term water management needs. Ecology and Department of Fish and Wildlife find that past and current flow levels are critically low at many times of year. Therefore, all streams must be closed to new withdrawals to protect the resource from further depletion.

The rule would close all WRIA 17 streams to

new withdrawals (including permit-exempt wells). The rule would also close all ground water that feeds the closed streams.

Ecology has limited authority to make some water available for new uses. These exceptions to the closures (below) are available as new sources of water are being developed.

Exceptions to the closures include:

- Seasonal withdrawals, authorized by new water rights, would be possible on the Big Quilcene River and Chimacum Creek during high flow months only. These new, seasonal water rights would be “junior” to the instream flows. Users would be required to interrupt their withdrawal when stream flows fall below the instream flow amount.
- Reserves of water would be available on each stream with an instream flow. (See map and Table, pages 5 and 6.)
- In designated coastal areas, new ground water uses would be allowed. (See map and table, pages 5 and 6.)



Biologist taking stream measurements.



Department of Ecology Stream Gauge

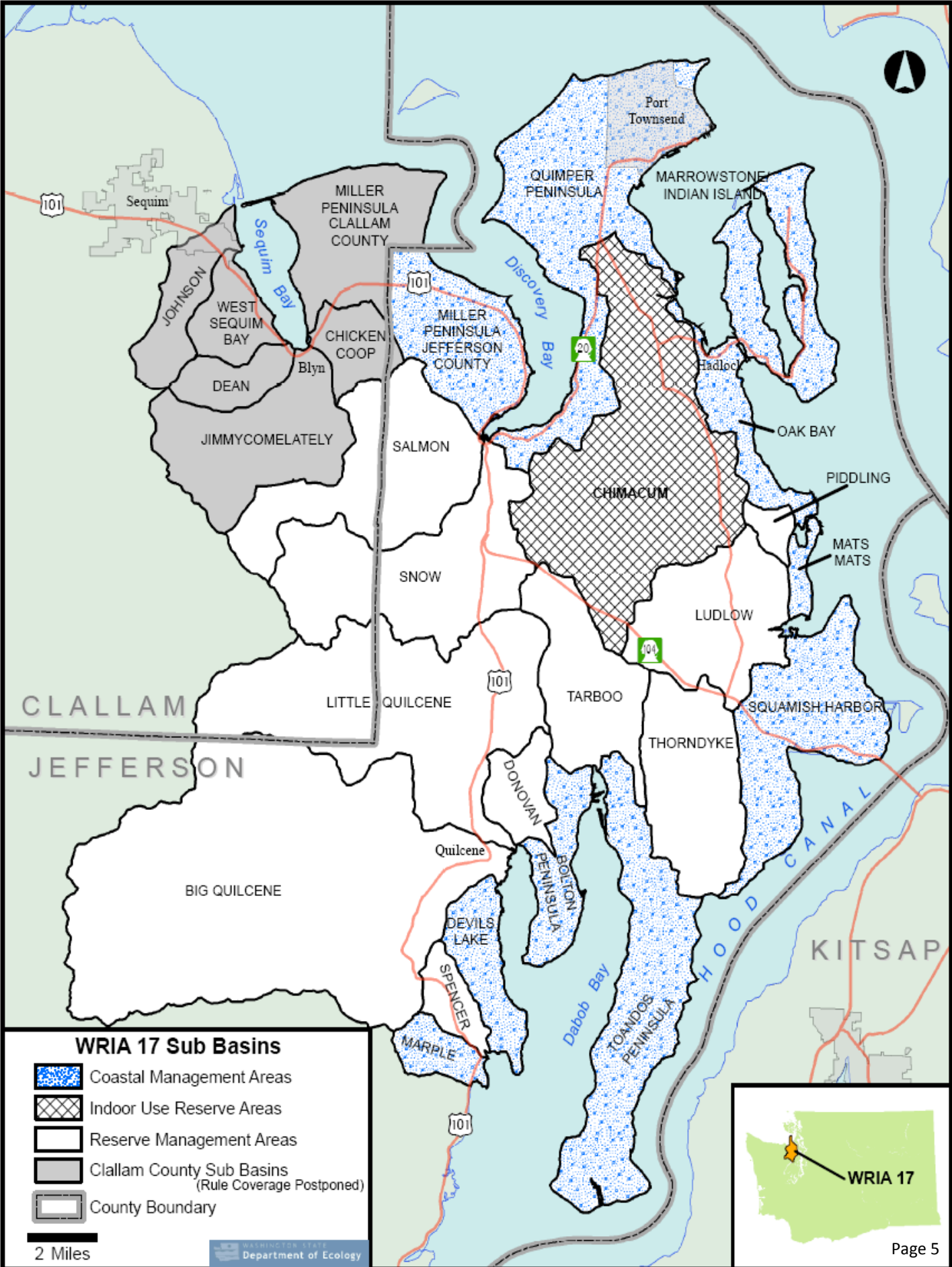
## BACKGROUND

*The Quilcene-Snow Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 17 is located along the northeast corner of the Olympic Peninsula. The watershed includes portions of Jefferson and Clallam counties.*






*The locally-led Quilcene-Snow Planning Unit completed a comprehensive watershed plan which the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners adopted in 2005. The Plan included a recommendation to work with Ecology to achieve consensus and approval of instream flows.*

*Water management in this watershed is complex for many reasons:*

- *There are 17 separate stream systems that drain to saltwater, and each requires its own protective measures. All the streams are relatively small, and can't tolerate large or numerous withdrawals. [Note: the proposed rule would set flows on 13 major streams.]*
- *Precipitation varies significantly throughout the watershed due to the “rainshadow effect” produced by the Olympic Mountains.*
- *Rain, not snow pack, is the major source of water that feeds streams and aquifers. Snow melt isn't available to feed stream flows during summer months.*
- *There is not a lot of water in streams during the late summer. Streams are fed by ground water during the dry summer months.*



**WRIA 17 Sub Basins**

-  Coastal Management Areas
-  Indoor Use Reserve Areas
-  Reserve Management Areas
-  Clallam County Sub Basins (Rule Coverage Postponed)
-  County Boundary

2 Miles



# RESERVES AND CONDITIONS OF USE WRIA 17 INSTREAM FLOW AND WATER MANAGEMENT RULE

This table shows the amount of water that would be available to be allocated from each stream sub-basin or management area. Those living in a public water system supply area are not eligible to draw from reserve supplies.

Conservation Standards are required for ALL new permit-exempt well water uses, WRIA-wide

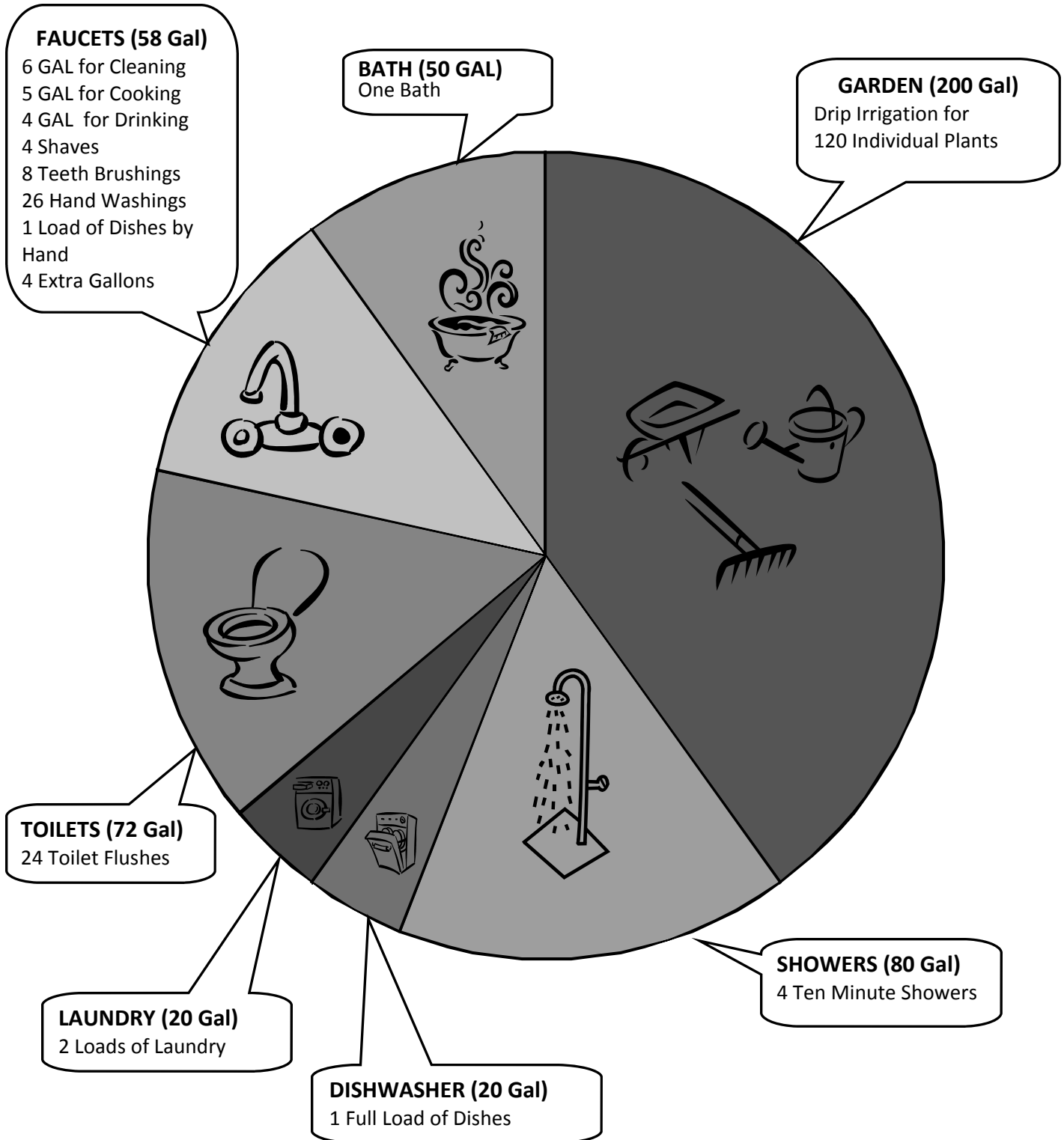
| STREAM SUB-BASIN OR<br>MANAGEMENT AREA  | RESERVE AMOUNT AND CONDITIONS OF<br>USE ABOVE CONSERVATION<br>STANDARDS     | APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF NEW<br>HOUSEHOLDS THE RESERVE COULD<br>SUPPLY |
|---|---|---|
| Big Quilcene River  | Reserve: 200,400gpd   | 756   |
| Chimacum Creek  | Reserve: 1,940 gpd. Indoor use only*  | 109*  |
| Donovan Creek   | Reserve: 2288 gpd   | 8   |
| Little Quilcene River, Leland and Howe Creeks   | Reserve: 38,800 gpd   | 146   |
| Ludlow Creek  | Reserve: 19,400 gpd.  | 73  |
| Piddling Creek  | Reserve: 1,935 gpd  | 7   |
| Salmon Creek  | Reserve: 9050 gpd   | 34  |
| Snow Creek  | Reserve: 9050 gpd   | 34  |
| Spencer Creek   | Reserve: 2,200 gpd  | 8   |
| Tarboo Creek  | Reserve: 7110 gpd   | 26  |
| Thorndyke Creek   | Reserve: 31,670 gpd   | 119   |
| Miller Peninsula (Jefferson County) and Quimper Peninsulas, and Oak Bay   | 5,000gpd for commercial agriculture allowed at certain withdrawal locations | # of new households not limited by a reserve quantity               |
| Mats Mats Bay, Squamish Harbor, Toandos Peninsula, Bolton Peninsula, Devils Lake, Marple, Marrowstone and other islands | Not limited by a reserve  | # of new households not limited by a reserve quantity               |

gpd = gallons per day

**CONSERVATION STANDARDS** for permit-exempt well use:

- Must use public water supply if available.
- Single residence or industrial user: 500 gpd maximum, 350 gpd average use.
- Group domestic: 500 gpd maximum and 350 gpd average use for each residence; 5,000 gpd total group maximum.
- Measuring of water use required.

# EXAMPLES OF WHAT A HOUSEHOLD CAN DO WITH 500 GALLONS OF WATER PER DAY



## NEXT STEPS: PROPOSED TIMELINE FOR RULE ADOPTION

- December 2, 2008 ⇒ Public workshop to discuss this rule proposal.
- Dec. thru Jan. 2009 ⇒ Updates to this overview and preliminary draft rule language will be posted on Ecology's webpage. Public comments are encouraged as Ecology finalizes the rule language.
- Spring 2009 ⇒ Proposed formal draft rule language and associated documents (CR-102) will be filed. Formal comment period begins.
- Spring 2009 ⇒ Public hearing.
- Summer 2009 ⇒ Adopt rule. Rule becomes effective 31 days after filing.

Check Ecology's webpage for updates on this timeline:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/instream-flows/quilsnowbasin.html>

## FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Ann Wessel  
Rulewriter, Water Resources Program  
Department of Ecology  
(360) 407-6785  
[awes461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:awes461@ecy.wa.gov)

Phil Wiatrak  
Quilcene-Snow Watershed Lead  
Department of Ecology  
(360) 407-6652  
[pwia461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:pwia461@ecy.wa.gov)

*If you need this publication in an alternate format, call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6600. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.*



DEPARTMENT OF  
**ECOLOGY**  
State of Washington