

Water Resources in the Upper Lake Roosevelt Watershed (WRIA 61)

The Upper Lake Roosevelt watershed, in northeastern Washington, encompasses about 576 square miles and includes northern Stevens County and portions of Canada. The Columbia River flows down from Canada and moves from east to west across the watershed. The Washington portion of the watershed is often referred to as Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 61.

Water availability

The Upper Lake Roosevelt watershed is not closed to new water uses (appropriations); see reverse side for general information on water rights. However, many streams in WRIA 61 are subject to administrative restrictions known as Surface Water Source Limitations (SWSL). Often these will require that new water uses stop during low flow periods. Groundwater connected to the surface water sources are also subject to SWSL restrictions.

In addition to SWSLs, some streams in WRIA 61 are “closed” by administrative rule, meaning that the water body is closed to new uses.

The upper portion of Lake Roosevelt is an impoundment/reservoir of the Columbia River. Ecology is currently pursuing development of water supplies on the main stem of the Columbia River to benefit instream and out of stream uses through storage, conservation, and regional water management agreements.

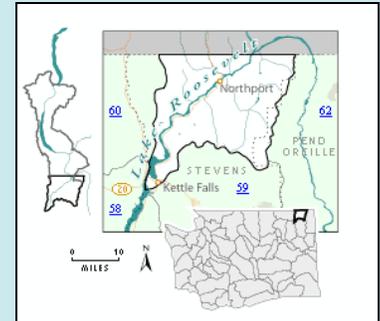
Water quality

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for bacteria and temperature have been completed for creeks and rivers within the Colville National Forest. A TMDL has also been done for total dissolved gas (TDG) in the Columbia River. TDG is excessive gas trapped in the water that causes harm to fish.

The Stevens County Conservation District will soon start monitoring water quality in the eastern part of this watershed. They will also work with landowners in the watershed to design and install projects to improve water quality.

Watershed Planning

Planning under RCW 90.82 has not yet started in WRIA 61.



WRIA 61

Definitions

SWSL: Surface Water Source Limitation. Administrative restrictions on water availability. A SWSL is established by Ecology after recommendation and consultation with the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife (RCWs 90.22, 90.03 & 90.05). The intent of a SWSL is to protect fish and wildlife habitat.

TMDL: Total Maximum Daily Load. A water quality improvement plan that establishes limits for the amount of pollutants that are allowed in a water body without violating state water quality standards.

Watershed Planning: Under RCW 90.82, a framework for developing local solutions to water-related issues on a watershed basis.

WRIA: Water Resources Inventory Area; also known as a watershed or river basin. For environmental management purposes, Washington is divided into 62 WRIsAs.

Water Rights in Washington State

Under state law, the waters of Washington collectively belong to the public and cannot be owned by any one individual or group. Instead, Ecology may grant individuals or groups the right to use them. Approval is given in the form of a water right permit.

You need a water right to use any surface water (water located above ground, such as lakes, rivers, streams and springs), or to use groundwater (water located under ground) at a rate of more than 5,000 gallons a day (see RCW 90.44.050).

Much of the water in Washington State has already been appropriated, which means it is spoken for and being used. This is making it more difficult to find water supplies for new growth and development, while still leaving enough water in our lakes and rivers for fish and other protected instream resources and values (such as wildlife, navigation, aesthetics and water quality).

More and more people are looking to change or transfer existing water rights to meet their water needs. Generally Ecology will consider changes to the following elements of a water right:

- Place of use.
- Point(s) of diversion or withdrawal.
- Purpose of use (including season of use).

Ecology is working closely with Washington communities to help them effectively manage their water, so we can meet current needs and help ensure future water availability for people, fish and the natural environment.

For more information

Water rights:

- General questions: Water Resources Program at 509-329-3400.
- Technical questions: Gene Drury, Permit Writer at 509-329-3566.
- Ecology website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rights/water-right-home.html>

Water quality:

- Jean Parodi, Water Quality Program, at 509-329-3517.
- Ecology website: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/links/wq_assessments.html

Watershed planning:

- Jaime Short, Shorelands & Environmental Assessment Program, at 509-329-3411.
- Ecology website: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/watershed/index.html>

Publications and studies for WRIA 61: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/apps/watersheds/wriapages/61.html>

Other contacts:

Department of Fish & Wildlife

Eastern Washington

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/reg/region1.htm>

509-892-1001

Colville Confederated Tribes

<http://www.colvilletribes.com>

509-634-2200

Stevens County Conservation District

509-685-0937 x3

<http://www.scc.wa.gov/index.php/contact/Stevens-County-Conservation-District.html>

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