

Jefferson County Surface Water Management Plan

Executive Summary

The Jefferson County Surface Water Management Plan continues the long-standing commitment of Jefferson County and its citizens to wisely manage the County's surface water resources. Jefferson County has not had a formal Surface Water Management Program, but County government, local agencies such as the Jefferson County Conservation District and the Jefferson County - Washington State University Cooperative Extension (WSU Extension), community organizations, and individual citizens have for many years conducted numerous activities that protect and restore surface water resources.

These activities have not been initiated as a comprehensive and planned effort, but rather as responses to emerging problems, such as shellfish closures, declining salmon runs on Chimacum Creek, and flooding in Quilcene. As a result the County's surface water management activities have lacked planning, coordination, clear priorities, and designated funding sources. The Surface Water Management Plan addresses these deficiencies.

Jefferson County is a predominantly rural county with low population and development densities and large areas of Parks, forest, and agricultural land. The County's surface waters are mostly in excellent condition, but there are areas of degradation that should be addressed. Much of that degradation occurred from past timber harvest, agriculture, and land development practices that current State and County regulations would not allow. Jefferson County has grown rapidly for the past 30 years and is expected to continue to grow. Jefferson County has been active in protecting and restoring surface water resources. The County should continue this commitment as it continues to grow and develop.

The Surface Water Management Plan recognizes that Jefferson County's most significant action to protect surface water resources was the adoption of the County Comprehensive Plan in 1998. The Plan designates forest and agricultural lands, protects environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains, streams, and wetlands, adopts stormwater management standards, restricts development in rural areas, and plans for intensive development and adequate stormwater management facilities in designated urban growth areas. These aspects of the Comprehensive Plan are the fundamental basis for protecting Jefferson County's surface water resources. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the County develop a Surface Water Management Plan. This Plan presents goals and policies, program components, and revenue analysis to guide the County in developing a Surface Water Management Program that will implement the Comprehensive Plan's surface water management goals and policies.

The Surface Water Management Plan also recognizes the important activities that are conducted by the Jefferson County Conservation District, WSU Extension, community groups, and individual citizens. The Plan emphasizes the County's role in coordinating these activities and strengthening community partnerships, rather than replacing them with County programs.

The Surface Water Management Plan considers Jefferson County's existing regulatory program that is implemented through the Unified Development Code. It also recognizes that most people when provided with sound information, technical assistance, and appropriate incentives will choose to use

surface water resources wisely and protect them from degradation. The Plan therefore recommends that the Surface Water Management Program emphasize public education and technical assistance, rather than additional regulation.

Because Jefferson County is a rural County, this Plan identifies a significantly lower need for stormwater management capital facilities than is typically found in plans prepared for cities and more urbanized counties.

This Plan presents priority Surface Water Management Program components and a planning level analysis of the expenditures required to implement these components. It also analyzes potential revenues to fund them. It considers Jefferson County 's financial condition and recognizes the financial realities of limited revenues and the need to focus County government on its core functions: County administration, law and justice, and transportation. It also recognizes the County's commitments to social and health services, parks, and recreation. In order to fund a Surface Water Management Program, this Plan proposes new revenues to fund surface water management activities.

The Surface Water Management Plan:

- Analyzes existing surface water conditions and considers the probable effects of future population growth and development;
- Considers the Federal, State, and County policies and regulations that govern surface water management;
- Discusses Jefferson County's current surface water management activities and recommends additional activities;
- Considers revenue sources for funding a Surface Water Management Program;
- Proposes surface water management goals, policies, and strategies; and
- Presents options for developing a Jefferson County Surface Water Management Program.

The analysis and recommendations in this Plan will guide Jefferson County in implementing a County-wide Surface Water Management Program that will:

- Comply with Federal, State, and County policies and regulations;
- Protect the County's surface water resources and the beneficial uses that depend on them;
- Protect life, health, property, aquatic habitats, and surface water resources;
- Coordinate the surface water management activities of Jefferson County and other local agencies, community groups and individual citizens, State agencies, and Tribes in a manner that is cooperative, efficient, and effective;
- Reflect the unique characteristics of Jefferson County;
- Increase public awareness and positively affect personal choices regarding surface water resources;
- Protect the quality and quantity of County's groundwater resources;
- Provide effective means for public involvement;
- Encourage and support the commitment of local agencies, community groups, and individuals to protect and enhance surface waters; and
- Provide adequate, stable, and equitable revenue to fund surface water management activities that minimize the financial impact on other priority County programs.