

2017 Policy Initiative:

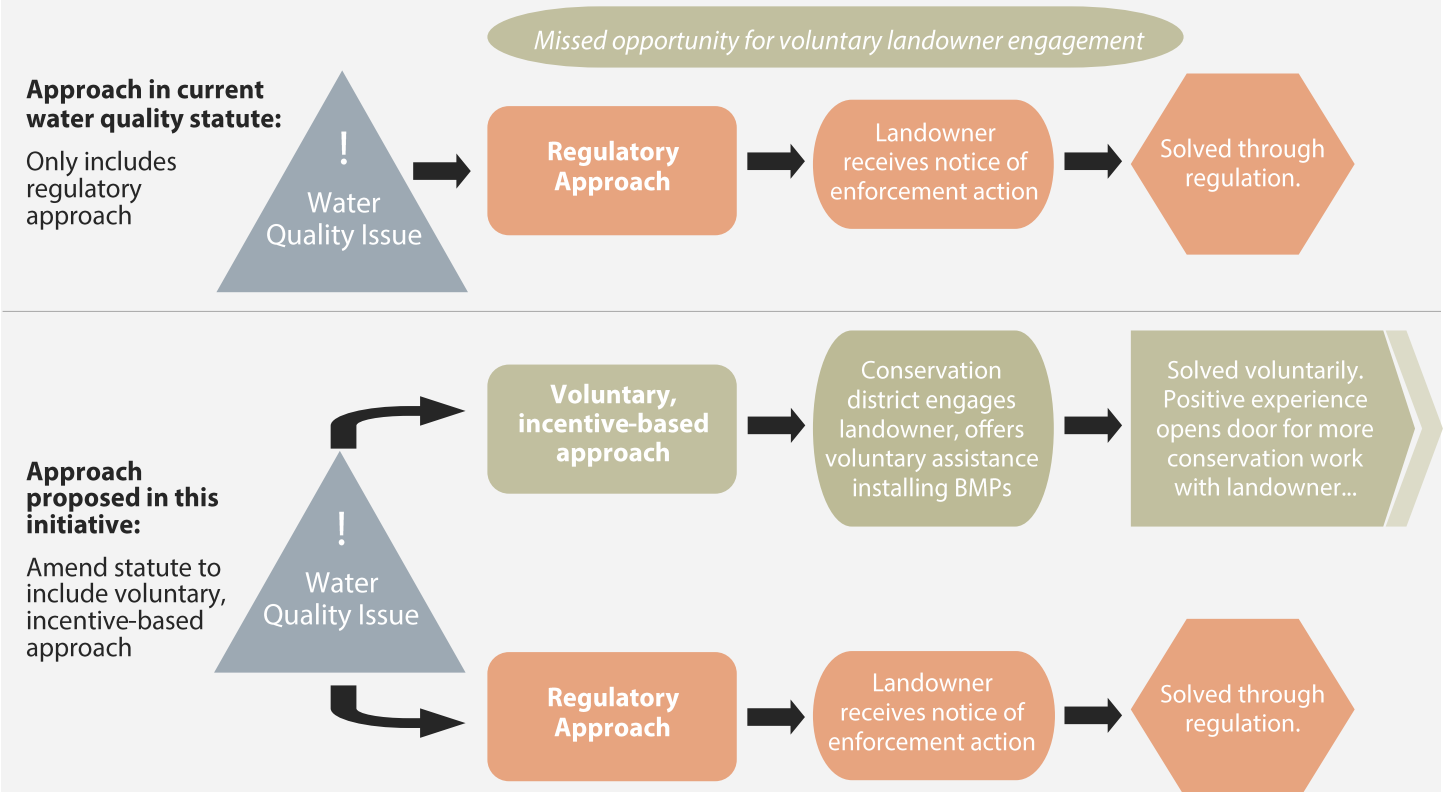
Incentives and State Water Quality Law

This initiative aims to improve the system for achieving state water quality objectives. The current state water quality statute would be amended to include a role for voluntary, incentive-based programs. This would provide a more comprehensive approach and more opportunities for positive landowner engagement with water quality solutions.

WHY IS THIS NEEDED?

- The Washington State Conservation Commission (SCC) and conservation districts (CDs) have a statutory duty to protect and prevent damage to our state's natural resources. We're tasked with delivering voluntary programs and services to all areas where there's a natural resource need.
- Many pressing resource needs in our state relate to water quality. In watersheds with high levels of landowner participation, we've demonstrated our voluntary approach and practices effectively address water quality issues.
- **However, Washington's current Water Pollution Control Statute doesn't include a role for the SCC, conservation districts, or voluntary conservation.** This is a missed opportunity to achieve results through an effective approach that creates positive, long-lasting engagement with landowners.

OPPORTUNITY FOR LANDOWNER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP



PROPOSAL UNDER CONSIDERATION

Amend the state water pollution control statute (RCW 90.48) to add a new section that would:

- Declare the policy of the state to address non-point water quality issues in a two-pronged approach—both regulatory *and* incentive-based.
- Designate the SCC as the lead agency with regard to the implementation of incentive-based programs for landowners.
- Designate the SCC as the lead agency for developing best management practices (BMPs) for agricultural activities.
- Require that the SCC report on the status and progress of implementation of incentive-based practices across the state.

The **Department of Ecology would retain all current authority** for the development of water quality criteria, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) determinations, etc.

FAQS

Will this affect the Department of Ecology's regulatory authority?

No. Proposed changes to the state water quality pollution control statute would add language about the role for the SCC and voluntary conservation in addressing non-point water quality issues. It would not affect Ecology's regulatory authority.

Why would the SCC be the lead in developing BMPs for agricultural activities?

BMPs funded with SCC cost-share follow USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) standards and specifications (or use professional engineering guidance if NRCS practices are not available). This allows us to leverage state and federal funds to get more work done.

NRCS practices are based on national research and reviewed and updated by the State Technical Advisory Committee.

The SCC Center for Technical Development is working with NRCS to provide rigorous trainings and certifications for staff who plan and implement BMPs.

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU AND YOUR STAKEHOLDERS!

The SCC Board of Commissioners would like comments about this initiative from CDs and partners. **Please talk with your local stakeholders about this proposal, and send us your feedback by COB on December 15, 2017 using the form on our website: scc.wa.gov/2017initiatives.**

Here are some questions to consider:

- What do you think is the role for enforcement related to water quality pollution?
- What do you think is the role for voluntary, incentive-based solutions related to water quality pollution?
- What do you think about engaging landowners in voluntary, incentive-based actions to address water quality issues before using enforcement?