



TO: Department of Ecology, Climate Pollution Reduction Program
FROM: Carly Michiels, Washington Public Ports Association
RE: Informal Comment Period for Chapter 173-448 WAC, Air Quality in Overburdened Communities Highly Impacted by Air Pollution
DATE: February 15, 2026

Submitted electronically through the e-comments web portal

The Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA) is a coordinating agency that represents Washington's 75 port districts across the state. Ports play a critical role in Washington's economy, supporting the global and local trade economy, transportation, recreation, and industrial activity while maintaining a commitment to environmental stewardship. WPPA fulfills our mission through advocacy, education, and connecting to serve our port members.

WPPA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Department of Ecology's informal comment period for Chapter 173-448 WAC, Air Quality in Overburdened Communities Highly Impacted by Air Pollution. Our members support the goal of improving air quality and public health outcomes in communities that have experienced disproportionate environmental burdens. Many ports have already invested in decarbonization projects, clean fuels, electrification, and community-focused program.

We offer the following comments and recommend the rulemaking focus on:

- Addressing the largest sources of emissions
- Avoiding introducing new requirements that increase costs or harm port competitiveness
- Utilizing existing federal EPA standards where appropriate and not create a new regional approach
- Aligning implementation with current state investments, and for example, other port-led decarbonization programs.

Washington's ports are historically and strategically located along major transportation corridors and industrial hubs that serve as critical nodes in the state's supply chain reflecting decades of regional growth. Many of these locations provide access to navigable waters, rail lines, highways, and industrial centers. Currently, fourteen port districts fall within communities Ecology has identified as overburdened.



Public ports frequently lead local economic development and environmental improvement projects. At the same time, they operate under highly competitive, trade-exposed conditions while serving as essential public infrastructure.

As reflected in other comments submitted by individual ports, there is concern that portions of the draft rule could impose new obligations and costs on ports and port tenants without resulting in clear or measurable air quality benefits. This concern is heightened in rural regions, as the rule focuses primarily on permitted entities rather than the largest contributors to local pollution. Such requirements could hinder ports' ability to attract new businesses or support responsible expansion of existing operations and would not significantly improve air quality.

The draft rule places significant emphasis on "high priority emitters" based on permitting status, rather than directing resources toward the greatest contributors. In many identified communities, major contributors to criteria pollutants include mobile sources, regional transportation corridors, wildfire smoke, wood burning, and other sources that are not controlled by port operations or individual stationary facilities. For example, a 2025 countywide [emissions inventory](#) found that Chelan County's largest source of emissions was wildfire activity.

We encourage Ecology to ensure that implementation focuses on the largest contributors to air pollution in each community, rather than applying new, potentially costly requirements by default to permitted sources. Overprioritizing stationary permitted sources risks diverting limited resources from strategies that would produce the most meaningful air quality improvements. When evaluating priority emitters, Ecology should also consider impacts on the following:

- Economic activity and market participation
- Business/tenant attraction and retention
- Job creation potential
- Regional economic development opportunities

WPPA is also concerned that added compliance obligations, particularly those layered on top of existing state and federal programs, may increase costs, introduce uncertainty, or affect port competitiveness without a clear connection to actual emission reductions. These added burdens could reduce resources available for voluntary and incentive-based projects that directly benefit overburdened communities. Public ports must balance environmental objectives with regulatory requirements to maintain public benefit, support economic development, and remain competitive with ports in other states and countries.



We urge Ecology to rely on existing federal EPA standards, methodologies, and regulatory frameworks rather than expending limited resources in creating parallel or duplicative state requirements. Alignment with federal programs supports regulatory certainty, efficient use of state capacity, and consistency across jurisdictions, especially for ports engaged in interstate and international transportation networks. For these reasons, we do not support the regional approach proposed in the draft rule. Where federal standards already address air quality objectives, Ecology should prioritize implementation, enforcement, and funding alignment.

Many Washington ports are already engaged in collaborative initiatives that reduce emissions, including electrification projects, shore power, clean truck programs, and decarbonization efforts. We encourage Ecology to integrate and align this rulemaking with these and other ongoing efforts to ensure complementarity rather than duplication to support and expand investments.

WPPA shares Ecology's commitment to reducing emissions, improving air quality, and addressing health disparities in overburdened communities. Ports remain deeply invested in advancing environmental justice while supporting the efficient, competitive supply chain that underpins Washington's economy. While we understand the intent of this rulemaking, we urge Ecology to focus regulatory and financial resources on strategies that will produce the most measurable and durable improvements in air quality and public health.

Meaningful progress will be most effective when pursued in partnership with ports, industry, and other permitted entities through coordinated planning, realistic timelines, and alignment with available technology and funding. Given limited state and local resources, collaborative approaches that leverage existing investments and operational expertise will produce more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment. We look forward to continuing working on this effort.