



March 15, 2021

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Subject: "Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit – Preliminary Draft" Comments

Ecology has requested comment regarding the Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit (Preliminary Draft) for municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) discharges to Puget Sound. The City of Port Angeles has reviewed the Department of Ecology's draft general permit and appreciates the opportunity to submit comments.

The City of Port Angeles would like to better understand the water quality and scientific basis for including Port Angeles in the Puget Sound Nutrients General Permit. The scope of the Salish Sea Model map (Figure 1) that identifies potential permittees extends far outside of the Puget Sound and adjoining water bodies as previously defined by Ecology in WAC 173-228. The purpose of WAC 173-228 was to establish a Vessel Sewage No Discharge Zone (Figure 2) to protect health, water quality, and sensitive marine resources.

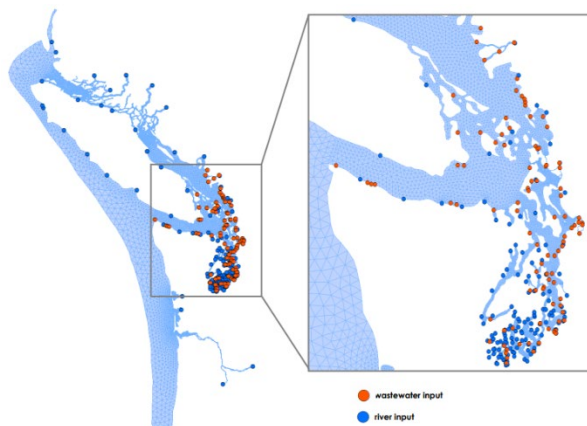


Figure 1 Map of all Point Source Discharges included in the Salish Sea Model

(Note: This map includes all wastewater sources included as point source discharges in the Salish Sea Model, including Ecology-permitted domestic and industrial facilities, EPA-permitted facilities, and Canadian facilities.)

Figure 1

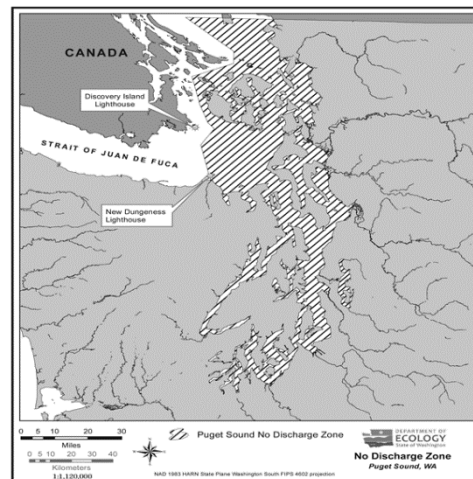


Figure 2

Stakeholders at the City of Port Angeles noted a discontinuity in the boundaries defined in the two figures above. The majority of the Strait of Juan de Fuca falls outside of the Puget Sound No Discharge Zone, allowing vessels to discharge sewage/blackwater whether treated or untreated within three miles of the City of Port Angeles Wastewater Treatment Plant primary outfall. The inconsistency of these regulatory boundaries around the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the distance from the critical areas, and the size of the Port Angeles WWTP raises questions about the validity of including the City of Port Angeles in the "Puget Sound Nutrient General Permit".

A map of the Puget Sound Nitrogen Monitoring Stations (Figure 3) provided by Ecology does not identify any stations in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

- Does Ecology have evidence that discharges from the City of Port Angeles WWTP influence Puget Sound Water Quality?
- Under what conditions and what percent contribution does the City of Port Angeles wastewater treatment plant influence Puget Sound water quality?

The nutrient monitoring stations in Figure 3 appear to align with the Figure 2 Puget Sound No Discharge Zone. The City of Port Angeles WWTP discharge is 14 miles West of this zone boundary.

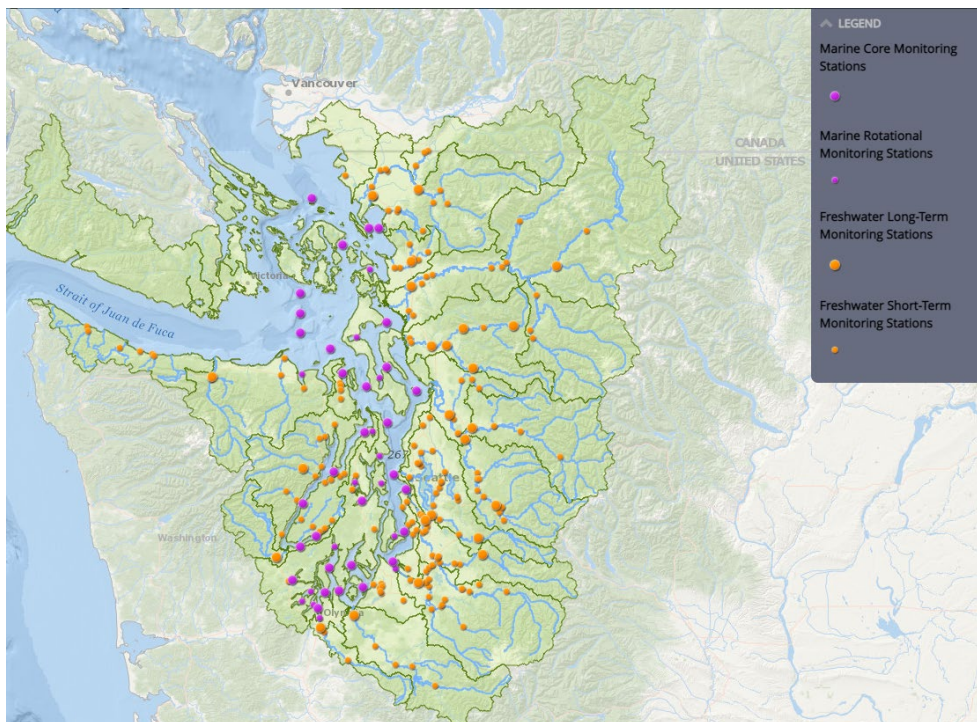


Figure 3

Ecologies “Response to Comments: 2014 Draft Petition to Designate the Waters of the Puget Sound as a No Discharge Zone” (Publication no. 15-10-001) outlines the considerations and science used to establish the NDZ in RTC #14:

“As Ecology considers the geographic extent of a NDZ, it will consider such factors as water quality and public health impacts, pumpout availability, cost-benefit, cost impact, water movement, hydrology, flushing, vessel movements and locations, sensitive water bodies, recreational impacts, aquatic life and habitat, tribal interests, stakeholder input, clarity of a boundary line and implementation and other considerations. There are four areas of the Puget Sound that are beyond 3 miles from shore (two large areas -west of Whidbey Island and north of the San Juan Islands).”

Using these same criteria with minor adjustments for municipal WWTP’s, listed below with edits single lined and new language underlined, how has the science changed to move the line of delineation out to the West boundary of the Strait of Juan de Fuca?

- Watery Quality
- Public Health Impacts
- ~~Pumpout Availability – WWTP Design~~
- Implementation of Growth Management Act in Rural Communities
- Cost-Benefit
- Cost-Impact
- Water Movement
- Hydrology
- Flushing
- ~~Vessel Movements and Locations – WWTP Locations~~
- Sensitive Water Bodies
- Recreational Impacts
- Aquatic Life and Habitat
- Tribal Interests
- Stakeholder Input
- Clarity of Boundary Line and Implementation
- Other Considerations

The City of Port Angeles requests Ecology provide:

1. Salish Sea model evidence showing the negative impact the City of Port Angeles WWTP has on the Puget Sound.
2. If the model predicts impact what is the percent contribution?
3. Under what conditions does this impact manifest itself?

The following comments are focused on the content and implementation of the General Permit.

- There is no accommodation for growth or development without risking the trigger of expensive capital improvements.
- Port Angeles has recently completed a series of major Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) capital projects at a cost of \$45,780,000. For a community the size of Port Angeles this is a significant expenditure. The service of these debts continues out to the year 2034. Funding an additional major capital project to add tertiary treatment to the WWTP would put additional strain on Port Angeles rate payers. The recent CSO projects have almost completely eliminated the previous chronic CSO discharges.
- The City of Port Angeles WWTP is currently operating well below the design capacity and the Growth Management Act directs city planners to designate urban growth areas to help protect critical areas. However, the City will not be able to utilize this WWTP capacity for UGA wastewater utility expansion without risk of triggering the AL₀ and AL₁ requirement of expensive capital improvements to the WWTP.
- The City of Port Angeles WWTP is currently the only facility accepting deliveries of septage in Clallam County. As Clallam County's rural population grows along with Clallam County Environmental Health's focus on septic system inspection compliance as required by Washington Administrative Code (WAC) Chapter 246-272A, septage deliveries to the Port Angeles WWTP will continue to grow. (Currently ~2% of nutrient loading). The City of Port Angeles cannot accept increases in septage without risk of triggering AL₀ and AL₁ requirements. The City has no control over the surrounding county growth.

- How will general permit limits, AL₀ and AL₁, be adjusted once new data is gathered using the new general permit testing results?
- How will ecology determine baseline versus improved or optimized conditions? Will facilities that reduce Nitrogen through optimization or capital improvements have new baseline caps calculated for reduced TIN limits based on new lower baselines?
- Is the monitoring schedule designation based on the NPDES plant size classification? The general permit does not specify the Monitoring Schedule for the listed Wastewater Treatment plants. Will this be added to the Final General Permit?

The City of Port Angeles's wastewater discharge in the Strait of Juan de Fuca is 14 miles west of the Puget Sound no discharge zone boundary. This zone was established based on scientific analysis of marine hydraulics, water quality and sensitive water bodies, flow characteristics, and cost among other requirements listed above. We request Ecology provides Salish Sea modeling data that shows the negative impact of the Port Angeles WWTP discharge on Puget Sound water quality and the time required to have this data analyzed and evaluated by the City of Port Angeles.

Thomas A. Hunter
Thomas A. Hunter (Mar 15, 2021 10:35 PDT)

Mar 15, 2021

Thomas Hunter, *Director of Public Works & Utilities*

Nutrient General Permit Comment 3_15_21

Final Audit Report

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