

Bob Aroyan

Dear Mr. Reiman,

Thank you for your update.

Plenty of time?

As a member of the public, I must respectfully disagree with the assertion that "updates always include ample time for public comment."

Ecology and its partners have devoted nearly two years to developing this very complex and technical plan. Given the depth of the material, a 100-day comment period is unlikely to provide sufficient time for members of the public—most of whom have full-time responsibilities—to carefully review, understand, and provide meaningful feedback. While the "reading guide" is a helpful resource (and I have reviewed it), it cannot replace the time needed to thoroughly study the proposed updates and their implications. To illustrate, I have invested nearly 40 hours of personal research to better understand the issues involved, and that level of effort is not feasible for most citizens.

In addition, meaningful public participation depends on awareness. A comment period, however well-intentioned, cannot serve its purpose if the public is not adequately informed of its availability. Effective outreach and communication are therefore essential to ensuring that a broad range of perspectives are heard.

I raise these concerns not in opposition, but in the hope that Ecology will re-consider extending the timeline and enhancing outreach efforts so that the public can engage more fully and constructively. Doing so would not only strengthen the quality of feedback, but also reinforce confidence in the transparency and inclusiveness of the process.

No fundamental Changes?

I must also raise concerns regarding the following assertion: "The draft plan is an update to the 2022 Nonpoint Plan and largely reflects updates and additions which provide the most current information about the various partners and programs involved in this effort, rather than fundamental changes to the strategies and tools utilized by the state to address nonpoint pollution."

In my view, the development of new Best Management Practices (BMPs) in conjunction with the Nonpoint Plan represents both a fundamental and significant change. Ecology has stated its intention to rely on state-developed BMPs in place of the long-established and scientifically vetted federal best practices. This is not a minor update—it is a shift in framework that directly affects how compliance will be judged.

While the draft plan describes these new BMPs as "voluntary," it also makes clear that landowners, agricultural producers, and property residents who do not adopt them could be deemed in violation of the state's clean water law. This creates a troubling discrepancy. Federal statutes clearly define nonpoint recommendations as voluntary; yet under the state's approach, the message is effectively

"comply, or else." Such a shift fundamentally alters the nature of participation from cooperative to coercive.

For this reason, it is vital that both the public and the Department have additional time to collaborate on a path forward that preserves the voluntary spirit intended under federal law. Building this cooperative framework into the plan update will not only ensure greater public trust but will also lead to stronger, more sustainable outcomes for water quality.