

Yakima-Klickitat Farm Association (Mark Herke)

Please find our comments attached.



August 29, 2025

RE: Comments on the Draft 2025 Water Quality Management Plan to Control Nonpoint Sources of Pollution

Dear Director Sixkiller and Nonpoint Source Program Staff,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2025 nonpoint plan.

We wish to state that we agree with the comments submitted by the other agricultural associations of Washington.

As we seek to address nonpoint issues, it is critical we acknowledge that nonpoint source means that no clear and directly attributable source is in play. Therefore, meaningful collaboration is essential to a good, fair public policy outcome.

Farmers and ranchers have watched too many processes ignore our concerns. As a result, we are wary of new programs, especially when we have a successful program focused on collaborative outcomes that is making a positive impact in agricultural communities- the Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP). Twenty-seven counties are actively engaged in protecting the environment and ensuring the viability of agriculture.

We need more reliance on this program and less focus on new regulations. VSP is the centerpiece of the nonpoint solution.

Unfortunately, the recent Tier II science and forestry rule process has left the agricultural community very disillusioned. When government ignores stakeholders and proceeds with questionable decision making, the harm is devastating.

We hope Ecology will focus on voluntary, collaborative efforts like the VSP rather than more regulations. This will help agriculture remain viable and continue to provide a secure and safe food supply for Washington and the world.

Sincerely,

Mark Herke
President