



Aqualis

20909 70th Ave W, Edmonds, WA 98026

360-888-0084 | nkang@aqualisco.com | October 11, 2025

Washington State Department of Ecology
Water Quality Program – Industrial Permitting
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504-7600

Re: Practical challenges for non-municipal hydroexcavation (vac truck) operators under the 2026 Sand & Gravel General Permit and current disposal pathways

Aqualis supports Ecology's water quality goals. We write to flag near-term implementation issues that affect safe, compliant hydroexcavation (hydrovac) work and the lawful handling of hydrovac spoils. Without practical disposal options and consistent acceptance criteria, owners and contractors may default to traditional hard-dig methods—raising worker safety risks, utility strike potential, surface disturbance, and traffic impacts.

Key challenges (summary)

- **Limited decant capacity & access:** Public decant sites often prioritize municipal NPDES wastes; commercial access, hours, and throughput are limited—driving longer hauls, queues, and higher costs.
- **Variable acceptance criteria at receivers:** SGGP facilities are tightening controls (TDS, sheen, hex-Cr where applicable). Criteria/documentation vary widely, causing refusals and return trips.
- **Mobile operations regulatory gap:** Hydrovac spoils are solid waste unless designated dangerous; landfills prohibit free liquids; POTW acceptance varies. Contractor yards used for decanting may trigger ISGP or require Conditional No Exposure.
- **Testing burden without a template:** Frequent profiles are reasonable, but lack of a standard template for routine ROW work adds cost and delay.
- **Unintended shift back to hard-dig:** When compliant hydrovac disposal is uncertain/uneconomical, crews may revert to hard-dig, increasing safety and environmental impacts.

Requests to enable safe, compliant hydrovac work

- **Interim guidance & model profile:** Standard parameters/frequency; recognize onboard/portable dewatering; reiterate “no free liquids.”
- **Decant capacity & directory:** Expand commercial access windows; publish living directory of permitted decant/vactor sites and private receivers (hours, rules, fees, contacts).
- **Standard intake expectations:** Ecology-aligned checklist for screening, documentation, soap/cleaner prohibitions, and oil/sheen controls; consider safe harbor for complete profiles.

- **Clarify washwater handling:** Plain language guidance for hose/truck rinses and soap impacted waters (POTW authorized points, containment).
- **Small contractor support:** Phased checklist, brief grace period, and technical assistance for compliant decant pads, covered storage, and sampling.
- **Mobile decant authorization (limited):** Evaluate a narrow authorization with strict BMPs/recordkeeping for low risk liquids to POTWs.

Sincerely,

Nirpaul Kang

PNW General Manager

Aqualis

360-888-0084 | nkang@aqualisco.com