

ABSTRACT

**THE HOOK BUT NOT THE FISH:
A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE ON TMDLS**

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Although total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) are a tool to clean-up pollution, it takes local community efforts to use this tool effectively to implement water quality improvements. Two TMDLs in the Dungeness watershed were triggered by a shellfish closure in Dungeness Bay and bacteria problems in the freshwater streams and ditches that flow into the Bay. Dungeness Bay is also a national wildlife refuge as well as an area for commercial and recreational shellfish harvesting. There are no point sources. Open irrigation ditches and land use changes (i.e., from fields to residential areas) exacerbate the non-point pollution problems in this watershed.

In the Dungeness watershed, local jurisdictions found three essential elements are important to using the TMDL as an effective tool for implementing water quality improvements: (1) community involvement in defining the TMDL; (2) local understanding of the TMDL study; and (3) community involvement in implementing the TMDL. Local monitoring provided the State TMDL project manager with a database of historic water quality results, trend analysis, and identification of problem water body segments. This allowed freshwater TMDL monitoring sites to target suspected problems and collect information at stations used in previous water quality studies. Local knowledge of land use changes was also useful to define monitoring stations. Local County, Conservation District and Tribal staff participated with the State lead on field sampling. Actual clean up efforts were simultaneously also pursued by these local entities. The results of the freshwater TMDL were well understood by the local jurisdictions and were communicated to the general public, through workshops and a newsletter. Although more complicated, the developing Dungeness Bay (marine) TMDL is following the same approach. Overall, there is greater acceptance of the problem and a willingness to spend resources on clean-up by the general public if the details of the TMDLs can be well explained. Cost-share incentives are being used to encourage landowner participation. In the end, it is the landowner who must mitigate the sources of non-point bacterial pollution through septic system maintenance and repair and keeping animal waste from the ditches and streams.