

ABSTRACT

**NOOKSACK RIVER WATERSHED BACTERIA TMDL:
WHEN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FORCES WORK TOGETHER**

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The implementation of the Nooksack River Watershed Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) has been guided by monitoring from early in the development of the implementation plan. Water quality monitoring data forms the core of effectiveness monitoring, compliance monitoring and the source tracking program. Implementation monitoring is paired with that water quality data to form an adaptive management strategy designed to reduce bacteria loads by as much as 98% by June 2005. The water quality monitoring has been conducted by the Northwest Indian College under grants and contracts from several sources since the before the TMDL was submitted. The Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE), the Conservation District and the Whatcom County Health Department have used that data to prioritize TMDL implementation activities. When the detailed implementation plan was developed the water quality monitoring program was paired with an implementation monitoring plan that formed the core of an adaptive management plan. Quarterly goals are set for bacteria concentrations at strategic locations within the basin. Quarterly or annual goals are set for several agencies with responsibility to implement the TMDL. Each quarter the DOE prepares a summary of the status of attaining the quarterly goals for both water quality and implementation activities. Based on that assessment an adaptive management decision is made to decide if changes need to be made to continue or improve the rate of progress. So far the TMDL is well ahead of schedule for meeting bacteria water quality criteria throughout the 208 square mile drainage. The biggest challenge in the future is how to maintain focus in the face of success.