

**ABSTRACT**

**ACHIEVING TMDL BACTERIAL GOALS THROUGH  
CONSERVATION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION**

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Monitoring data demonstrates significant improvement of a serious water quality problem has been achieved following the development and implementation of a bacterial total maximum daily load (TMDL). This change occurred within a surprisingly short time period and, if this trend continues, use of an important tribal resource (shellfish) could be restored this year. This is a result of the collaborative effort of many participants, each contributing to the extent of their respective charters. Examples include improved regulatory oversight of potential pollution sources in the Nooksack River watershed, provision of technical and financial resources to dairy operators, and improved and sustained water quality monitoring. Individual site-specific farm plans are an effective tool to address both water quality concerns and landowner objectives. The farm plan approach works best when all the farms identified as potentially contributing to the problem are required to implement a plan designed for their current operation. Prior to the 1998 Washington State Dairy Nutrient Management Act only a handful of dairy operators had fully implemented farm plans. Now Whatcom Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff have developed farm plans for all 200 dairies. Over 56K acres are now being managed under farm plans requiring 3,000K acres of vegetative practices to protect watercourses from surface runoff of sediment, nutrients and bacteria. The improved water quality in the Nooksack River corresponds with implementation of farm plans over the past four years.