

Announcement

Final East Fork Lewis River TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan accepted by EPA - available online
November 19, 2021



Greetings East Fork Lewis River Partnership!

The final [East Fork Lewis River TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan \(ARP\)](#) is now available online.

This plan identifies strategies, implementation actions, and best management practices (BMPs) to achieve clean water in the East Fork Lewis River watershed.

The plan also identifies causes of water quality impairments and pollutant sources, estimates the pollution reductions needed to meet water quality standards, and includes an education and outreach strategy. An implementation schedule, cost estimates, interim milestones, criteria to measure progress, and a monitoring plan to evaluate effectiveness of implementation efforts are also established.

[Read the full plan online](#) and find more background information on the project [website](#) or the [East Fork Lewis River Partnership webpage](#).

Background

The East Fork Lewis River and its tributaries are on Washington State's [impaired waters list](#) (303d list) for warm water temperatures and bacteria pollution problems, which drives the need to develop a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study, as required by the Clean Water Act. Ecology chose to develop this TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan in advance of a TMDL, to help speed-up implementation of best management practices (BMPs) to improve water quality.

Identifying pollution sources and building partnership

In 2018, Ecology published the [East Fork Lewis River Source Assessment Report](#), which identified critical areas to improve water quality. Shortly after, the [East Fork Lewis River Partnership](#) was launched to work collaboratively with local, state, and federal governments, tribes, nonprofits, and private landowners to develop and implement the TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan. Since the Partnership was launched, over 50 different partners from 30 organizations have engaged in East Fork Lewis River Partnership activities.

Implementation priorities

Nonpoint source pollution from [agricultural runoff](#), [forestry runoff](#), [stormwater runoff](#), and failing septic systems is the main water quality challenge in the East Fork Lewis River watershed. Priorities for long-term implementation are to address water quality impacts from septic systems, stormwater, and agriculture, and to increase riparian restoration, and streamflow restoration efforts in the watershed.

Ecology believes that implementing the actions outlined in this plan will result in the attainment of bacteria and temperature water quality standards.

Clean water goals

The goal for the East Fork Lewis River is to achieve bacteria water quality standards by 2035, and temperature water quality standards by 2055. A longer timeline has been established for temperature to allow enough time for trees to grow and reach their site potential tree height. Effectiveness monitoring will be implemented to assess progress towards meeting water quality standards.

If water quality standards are not achieved through implementation actions outlined in this plan, then a formal TMDL will be required in the watershed to comply with the Clean Water Act. Ecology will use effectiveness monitoring results to determine if a formal TMDL is necessary for bacteria in 2035, and in 2055 for temperature.

The long-term vision for the East Fork Lewis River Alternative Restoration Plan is to achieve clean water, meet water quality standards, and support beneficial uses for people, fish, and wildlife.

Poop Smart Clark

Multiple new projects and programs are underway to help improve water quality in the East Fork Lewis River watershed, including the new [Poop Smart Clark](#) Pollution Identification and Correction program, which will comprehensively address bacteria pollution in the watershed from agriculture, septic systems, and pet waste. This new program received funding from [Ecology's Water Quality Combined Funding Program](#) for implementation in the watershed starting in 2021. Other funders supporting Poop Smart Clark include USDA NRCS, the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Program, and the Washington State Conservation Commission. The [Bacteria Monitoring and Nonpoint Source Identification Report](#) completed in 2021 helped identify priority locations for Poop Smart Clark implementation.

Intended outcomes in the East Fork Lewis River from Poop Smart Clark include:

- 1,965 direct mailers to landowners.
- Door-to-door outreach to 400 landowners.
- 350 septic system inspection rebates.
- 140 rebates for septic tank pumping.
- Site visits and technical assistance to 30 agricultural landowners with livestock.
- Conservation planning and implementation of water quality BMPs.

Finalizing the Alternative Restoration Plan

A [public webinar](#) to present the draft plan was hosted in August 2020, and public comment was solicited through September 2020. Ecology published a [Response to Comments Memo](#) in October 2020.

The final [East Fork Lewis River TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan](#) was published in October 2021, and [transmitted to EPA for acceptance](#). EPA formally [accepted the plan](#) in November 2021. The East Fork Lewis Alternative Restoration Plan is the first plan of its kind to be completed in Washington State, and in EPA's Region 10 (Pacific Northwest).

With the development of this Alternative Restoration Plan, all [category-5 temperature and bacteria listings](#) in the East Fork Lewis River will be changed to a new 'category 5-alt' listing in [Washington State's Water Quality Assessment](#) and in the Environmental Protection Agency's [ATTAINS database](#). This new assessment category indicates that a plan to improve water quality has been developed by Ecology and accepted by EPA. Development of this plan also satisfies the nine minimum elements of watershed planning, established by Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

Contacts

Achieving water quality goals in the East Fork Lewis River will require long-term investment and coordination from multiple stakeholders. For questions about the East Fork Lewis River TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan, or what you can do for clean water, contact an Ecology staff member.

- Contact [Lawrence Sullivan](#), Water Cleanup and Technical Assistance Unit Supervisor, for questions regarding the East Fork Lewis River TMDL Alternative Restoration Plan.
- Contact [Molly Gleason](#), Water Quality and Monitoring Specialist, for questions regarding water quality monitoring.
- Contact [Heather Patt](#) or [Hannah Coe](#), Nonpoint Source Water Quality Specialists, for questions regarding nonpoint source pollution.
- Contact [Leanne Whitesell](#), Southwest Regional Office Funding Coordinator, for questions regarding funding for implementation.

Thank you for your commitment to clean water!