

# Lacamas Creek Partnership

*Washington State Department of Ecology*

*Presentation given by Devan Rostorfer, Water Quality Specialist*

**Lacamas Watershed Council – May 5, 2021**



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## Written transcript from presentation on May 5, 2021

**Slide 1:** Thank you to the Lacamas Watershed Council for inviting us to present to the Executive Leadership team.

**Slide 2:** Our goal for this presentation is to provide an overview of the Lacamas Creek Partnership for Clean Water and the upcoming Lacamas Creek Source Assessment.

**Slide 3:** My name is Devan Rostorfer, and I am a water quality specialist for the Washington State Department of Ecology's Southwest Regional Office, working out of the Vancouver Field Office. My primary job responsibility is to develop Water Cleanup Plans for polluted watersheds, and I am also a project manager for two restoration projects in Clark County, which have been funded through Ecology's grant program.

Also on our Ecology team, I want to introduce Sheelagh McCarthy, who is a Hydrogeologist in the Environmental Assessment Program. Sheelagh is the technical lead developing the Lacamas Creek Source Assessment. Our team also includes Molly Gleason who is a water quality monitoring and data analysis specialist, who is the field lead for the Lacamas Creek Source Assessment. Lawrence Sullivan is the supervisor of the Water Cleanup and Technical Assistance Unit, which includes Devan Rostorfer and Molly Gleason. The project will also have a nonpoint source specialist joining the team to provide support finding and fixing pollution sources in the Lacamas watershed.

**Slide 4:** For today's presentation my objective is provide an overview of Ecology's Water Cleanup process in polluted watersheds, and Molly Gleason will present the details of the Lacamas Creek Source Assessment and monitoring plan.

**Slide 5:** Before we get into the details, here is a map showing the total coverage area of Ecology's Southwest Regional Office. As representatives of the Southwest Regional Office, we are responsible for all of the watersheds draining into the Pacific Ocean and the Lower Columbia from approximately the Chehalis River Basin in Grays Harbor, Thurston and Lewis Counties, south to Skamania County. However, since I started at Ecology, I have had the great fortune to have the majority of my work targeted to watersheds in Clark County, which I am eager to talk to you about today.

**Slide 6:** For those of you less familiar with Ecology's presence in Clark County, I wanted to highlight that we do have a Vancouver Field Office with thirteen staff. This includes staff from Ecology's spills prevention and spills response program, toxics cleanup, and staff from the water quality program, which includes municipal stormwater, stormwater grants, construction stormwater, forestry, sand and gravel, and myself as the TMDL and water quality coordinator. There is also a Shorelands staff person working in Vancouver Field Office on shoreline management and wetland related to issues.

**Slide 7:** Now I would like to transition into the formal presentation starting with a quick overview of watersheds in Clark County.

**Slide 8:** As many of you know, Clark County has approximately ten major watersheds that drain water throughout Clark County's landscape from forest dominated headwaters in the east portion of the county, all the way downstream to more urbanized areas along the Columbia river. This includes Lacamas Creek watershed, which is one of the ten local watershed.

**Slide 9:** According to the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) census in 2017, there are approximately 1,978 farms in Clark County making up an area of just over 90,000 acres in watersheds. Approximately 58 percent of these farms are associated with the production of livestock, poultry, and other products, and 42 percent are crops.

**Slide 10:** When I was preparing for this presentation, I was surprised to learn that Clark County is actually number three in the State of Washington for the total number of farms, behind Yakima and Spokane counties. In total, the market value of agriculture in 2017 was \$47.7 million dollars in Clark County, with almost \$28 million dollars related to livestock. According to USDA, Clark County has over 300,000 chickens, and over 15,000 cattle, and this only a subset of the total livestock. The reason I am presenting these numbers is to demonstrate that there is a significant amount of agriculture and livestock in Clark County's watersheds, which can have an impact water quality.

**Slide 11:** Shifting gears to septic systems, according to Clark County Public Health, currently there are an estimated 34,500 septic systems in Clark County. This map shows the location and density of septic systems and as you can see, there are quite a bit in the Lacamas watershed. Of the 34,500 septic systems, approximately 30 percent, or 10,350 septic systems are considered noncompliant because they have not been inspected within the past three years. Septic system inspections are required every three years to assess the location, condition, and performance of septic systems and to identify any maintenance, repair, or replacement needs that may be associated with failing septic systems and water quality concerns. Normally, septic system maintenance and tank pumping is recommend every five years to keep septic systems functioning optimally. Replacement of failing systems are recommended every 25 to 40 years.

**Slide 12:** On the screen now is a map from the Department of Ecology's Water Quality Atlas in 2018. On this map, all of the waters shown in red are locations where rivers in Clark County are not meeting state water quality standards. These rivers are impaired and are on the states polluted waters list. As you can see, this makes up a significant amount of rivers in the County that run through backyards, and through public spaces. When a segment of river is identified as being polluted, this is what drives Ecology to develop a Water Cleanup Plan.

**Slide 13:** One of the main questions Ecology tries to answer through a Water Cleanup Plan is, "how much pollution needs to be reduced to meet water quality standards?" In order to answer this question there are four main steps to Ecology's water cleanup process. First, Ecology completes water quality monitoring and data collection, which we are starting right now for the Lacamas watershed. Second, we complete a Source Assessment study, which we are also beginning to develop for Lacamas. Third, we use the results from our study, and we develop a Water Cleanup Plan. Finally, in step 4 we focus on working with local partners to implement water quality best management practices for septic systems, agriculture, stormwater, and restoration.

**Slide 14:** Source Assessments and Water Cleanup Plans contain two different types of information. In a Source Assessment, which is what we are developing now, Ecology will identify critical areas for water

quality, estimate pollutant reductions needed, and identify priority planting areas to increase riparian shade. In a Water Cleanup Plan, Ecology focuses on developing an implementation plan, estimating the financial and technical assistance needed, coming up with an implementation timeline, criteria to measure progress, and a plan to monitor effectiveness of implementation.

**Slide 15:** To develop these plans, Ecology launched the Lacamas Partnership for clean water and had its first coordination for agency staff on April 16, 2021.

**Slide 16:** The Lacamas Partnership for clean water is a collaboration of local, state, federal governments, non-profits, watershed groups, and private landowners working together to develop and implement a Water Cleanup Plan for Lacamas Creek focused on implementation of best management practices to improve water quality. The partnership will start meeting regularly when implementation planning begins.

**Slide 17:** Here is our timeline for the Lacamas Creek partnership. Currently we are in the water quality monitoring and data collection phase, which is starting next month (June 2021) and is expected to be complete in October 2021. Our target is to complete technical analysis by next August, and to have a final Source Assessment by Spring 2023 with implementation planning to follow.

**Slide 18:** The ultimate goal of all of Ecology's clean water work is to achieve clean water, meet state water quality standards, and support beneficial uses for people, fish, and wildlife; and residents and visitors of Clark County. This work is to ensure that surface water quality is swimmable, drinkable, and fishable for current and future generations.

**Slide 19:** We have many agency partners that are working with us on this effort and I thought I would just quickly go over the different roles and responsibilities of each group.

**Slide 20:** Molly Gleason at Ecology will be completing the water quality data collection and analysis. Sheelagh McCarthy and Molly will be developing the technical Lacamas Creek Source Assessment and I will be developing the Water Cleanup Plan focused on implementation. Some of you may be aware that there is also a lake management plan effort happening in the watershed that is separate from the Ecology effort. The City of Camas and Ecology's Freshwater Algae Control Program are leading the Lake Management Plan. For questions about swimming advisories, Clark County Public Health is the primary organization responsible for water quality at designated swimming areas.

**Slide 21:** The Washington Department of Agriculture manages Dairies in the watershed and they have requested that all outreach and contact with dairies be conducted through the Department of Agriculture in consideration of the sensitivity of the industry and how important they are as partners. Smaller agriculture is the responsibility of Clark Conservation District, NRCS, and the new Poop Smart Clark pollution identification and correction program. Septic systems in Clark County are managed by Clark County Public Health. Finally, stormwater is the responsibility of Clark County, the City of Camas, and Vancouver.

**Slide 22:** If you are curious about how you can get involved. I would encourage you to get involved in the following ways.

- **Education and outreach** – Help your neighbor understand what they can do to protect clean water

- **Support** – Donate or vote to support your local environmental programs.
- **Septic systems** – Complete regular septic system inspections, maintenance, and repair.
- **Agriculture** – Implement manure management best management practices for livestock and horses, and implement fences, riparian buffers, and off-stream watering to keep animals out of the river.
- **Restoration** – Plant trees, protect wetlands, and improve habitat in your backyard.
- **Lawn care** – Be mindful about fertilizer application
- **Pet waste** – Pick up your dog doo.

**Slide 23:** I would also encourage you to reach out to one of these organizations that is a part of the new Poop Smart Clark program. These organizations are working together to find and fix source of pollution in Clark county watersheds.

**Slide 24:** To stay informed on what is happening in the Lacamas watershed, we have developed the Lacamas Creek Partnership webpage. [www.tinyurl.com/lacamaspartnership](http://www.tinyurl.com/lacamaspartnership) This webpage will contain information on the Lacamas Creek Source Assessment and Water Cleanup Plan.

**Slide 25:** Finally, another way that you can get involved in the watershed is to help Ecology be the eyes and ears for water quality. If you see something, say something! You can submit an environmental report online through email, a form, or a phone number. Things you should report include direct discharges to water, spills, and other environmental hazards you observe.

**Slide 26:** Before Molly Gleason presents on the Lacamas Source Assessment, I wanted to close this presentation by mentioning that an investment in the Lacamas watershed is an investment in Lacamas Lakes. I am confident that Molly's presentation will help you see that connection between how activities throughout the Lacamas watershed have the potential to impact water quality in Lacamas Lake.

**Slide 27:** Thank you all for being here tonight and thank you for your commitment to clean water.

**Slide 28:** I am not going to hand it over to Molly Gleason who is going to present the details of Ecology monitoring plan and the Lacamas Creek Source Assessment starting this year.

## Contact

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