

Overview

RCW [70.365.050](#) requires Ecology to “create a stakeholder advisory process to provide expertise, input, and a review of the department’s rationale for identifying priority chemicals and priority consumer products and proposed regulatory determinations.”

The goal of our stakeholder advisory process is to ensure that interested parties:

- Understand the law and our implementation process.
- Are informed about our research efforts through emails, webinars, and regular updates to our implementation website.
- Have the opportunity to give expertise and input through email, meetings, and calls.
- Can provide formal comments, expertise, and input at key decision points through a public comment period.

Our stakeholder advisory process involves frequent outreach to all required stakeholder groups to solicit their review, expertise, and input. Outreach is accomplished through regular email list notifications, website updates, outreach emails, meetings with stakeholders, Washington State Register announcements, webinars, social media, blog posts, and formal public comment periods.

Status of process to date

Ecology and Health began developing a stakeholder advisory process soon after the law took effect. In September 2019, we shared the product categories we were researching and invited manufacturers, industry groups, environmental advocates, and other interested stakeholders to share data on:

- Specific chemicals and concentrations found in relevant chemical-product combinations.
- Volumes of the product sold or present in Washington.
- The potential for human or environmental exposures.
- The availability of safer alternatives.
- Suggestions of additional chemical-product combination recommendations that may be relevant for sensitive populations.

Between sharing our research categories and publishing our draft priority product report, we met with:

- American Chemistry Council
- BASF Corporation
- Color Pigments Manufacturers Association
- Public Health Seattle King County
- Resilient Floor Covering Institute
- Serlin Haley LLP for the Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association
- Toxic-Free Future
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

We also received email engagement and commentary from:

- Alkylphenols & Ethoxylates Research Council
- American Coatings Association
- Arylessence
- Can Manufacturers Institute Science and Technology Regulatory Subcommittee
- Toxic-Free Future
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Outreach

RCW 70.365.050 specifies that our stakeholder advisory process must include “but is not limited to, representatives from: Large and small business sectors; community, environmental, and public health advocacy groups; local governments; affected and interested businesses; an expert in scientific data analysis; and public health agencies.”

In order to ensure our process had representatives from the required sectors and more, we developed an outreach strategy. We first started reaching out to our existing email lists for related projects, such as Chemical Action Plans. To inform our stakeholders about our first draft report, we sent over 200 individual emails to large and small retailers, chemical and product manufacturers, environmental advocacy organizations, scientific experts, public health agencies, and more. Through these efforts, we grew our email list to over 225 subscribers. It includes representation from every major stakeholder group outlined in the law, as well as the public.

Implementation webinars

We have hosted two webinars to date. The first aimed to explain the law and its requirements. The second focused on our [draft report on priority consumer products](#). Both involved time to answer questions from affected industries and interested stakeholder groups. A summary of the questions and answers from each of these webinars are on our [implementation site](#).

Ecology adopted a more robust outreach strategy after the first webinar. As a result, attendance for the second webinar grew significantly. In August 2019, [66 attendees](#) joined our first webinar. In February 2020, [97 attendees](#) joined our second webinar, which we hosted at two separate times in an effort to make the content accessible to stakeholders across time zones.

About a quarter of the participants in each webinar represented manufacturers or large businesses. The remainder of attendees represented small businesses, tribal organizations, local governments, environmental and public health advocacy groups, scientific experts, public health agencies, and the general public.

Public comments on our draft report

The release of our draft report opened a 45-day public comment period, and during that time, we received over 1,300 comments on the report. The vast majority of the comments (about 97 percent) came from the public. There were 22 comments from manufacturers or large businesses and five from environmental or public health advocacy organizations.

Finally, we received comments from each of the following stakeholder groups:

- Manufacturing industry associations
- Large businesses
- Community groups
- Local governments
- Public health agencies
- Scientific experts

Community outreach

In addition to opening our doors for meetings and sharing regular research updates, the Safer Products for Washington team also co-hosted a community outreach event in collaboration with Public Health Seattle King County in February 2020. We invited community groups to learn about the draft report on priority consumer products and share input around their use of the listed products.

This event furthered our efforts to focus on equity in the Safer Products for WA implementation process. We brought Indigenous, East African, Latinx, and many other community members from the Seattle area to the table. We heard community concerns that the safer and healthier option is sometimes more expensive and inaccessible. Participants also asked for actions to take to protect themselves while we continue to evaluate products at Ecology. We are working to develop resources and materials for personal tips in the meantime, and we will consider the accessibility and affordability of any safer alternatives we look at in future phases.

The concerns we heard and the community feedback shared at this event will shape our outreach efforts going forward. It helped create partnerships between Ecology and community organizations, which will help ensure affected communities are aware of the process and have a chance to weigh in.

Public participation

We understand the important consumer impacts that could result from the implementation of this program. We are making a concerted effort to involve the public in the process because they have a right to participate in decisions affecting their lives. Feedback regarding how people interact with these consumer products will influence our decisions about the scope of any potential new regulations.

We know more public involvement in the process will result in more effective, sustainable decisions and programs. To gather more public feedback, we are looking for ways to reach communities beyond simply email announcements and web updates. Increased supplemental funding from the Legislature will allow us to continue our efforts toward direct community outreach—such as individual meetings and events with community groups.

We are working to grow our efforts around public engagement. Beyond the King County area, we aim to form partnerships with local governments in Central and Eastern Washington to reach communities across the state. We will continue working to create spaces for the public to provide input. We welcome feedback around how to better reach communities and individuals, and especially those who have disproportionate exposure to toxic chemicals.

Planning for Phase 3

As we move forward with our stakeholder engagement process, we will continue to offer frequent updates to ensure our work is transparent. We aim to offer an implementation webinar in the summer of 2020 describing how Phase 3 of the law will be implemented, when interested parties can expect to hear from us, and what opportunities they will have to provide input. As we work through Phase 3, we will follow the precedent set in Phase 2 of sharing regular research updates via email and webinars.