



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

**Water Quality Assessment
for Washington
February 2017**

Focus on Forest Lands





Status of Washington's Water Quality Assessment

- July 2016 Ecology received EPA approval of most recent WQ Assessment
- Purpose of presentation is to describe:
 - what the WQ Assessment is, and
 - how the list of impaired waters on forest lands changed since our last assessment

What is the Water Quality Assessment?

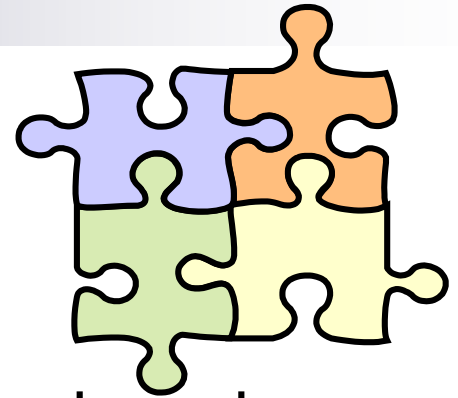
- **Its a comprehensive assessment of the quality of Washington's waters**
 - required under section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act
 - helps us track if waterbodies are getting cleaner or dirtier
 - allows us to set priorities for protecting and improving water quality used for swimming, fishing, fish habitat, and drinking water
 - provides an "Integrated Report" on WQ to EPA

WQ Assessment Categories

Waters are placed into five different categories:

Category 1: Meets Tested Standards	Not known to be impaired No TMDL required
Category 2: Waters of Concern	
Category 3: Insufficient Data	
Category 4: A--Has a TMDL B--Pollution Control Plan C--Nonpollutant	Impaired TMDL/Cleanup plan in place
Category 5: The 303(d) List	Impaired TMDL/Clean up Plan required

How does Ecology put the Assessment together?



- Develop **written policies** to help determine when a water is polluted or showing signs of pollution.
- Compile **available water quality data** that meets state credible data requirements.
- Assess the data by **comparing it to existing water quality standards** to see if we have problems.
- Waters on **Category 5, the 303(d) List**, require a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to bring waters back into compliance with the standards.

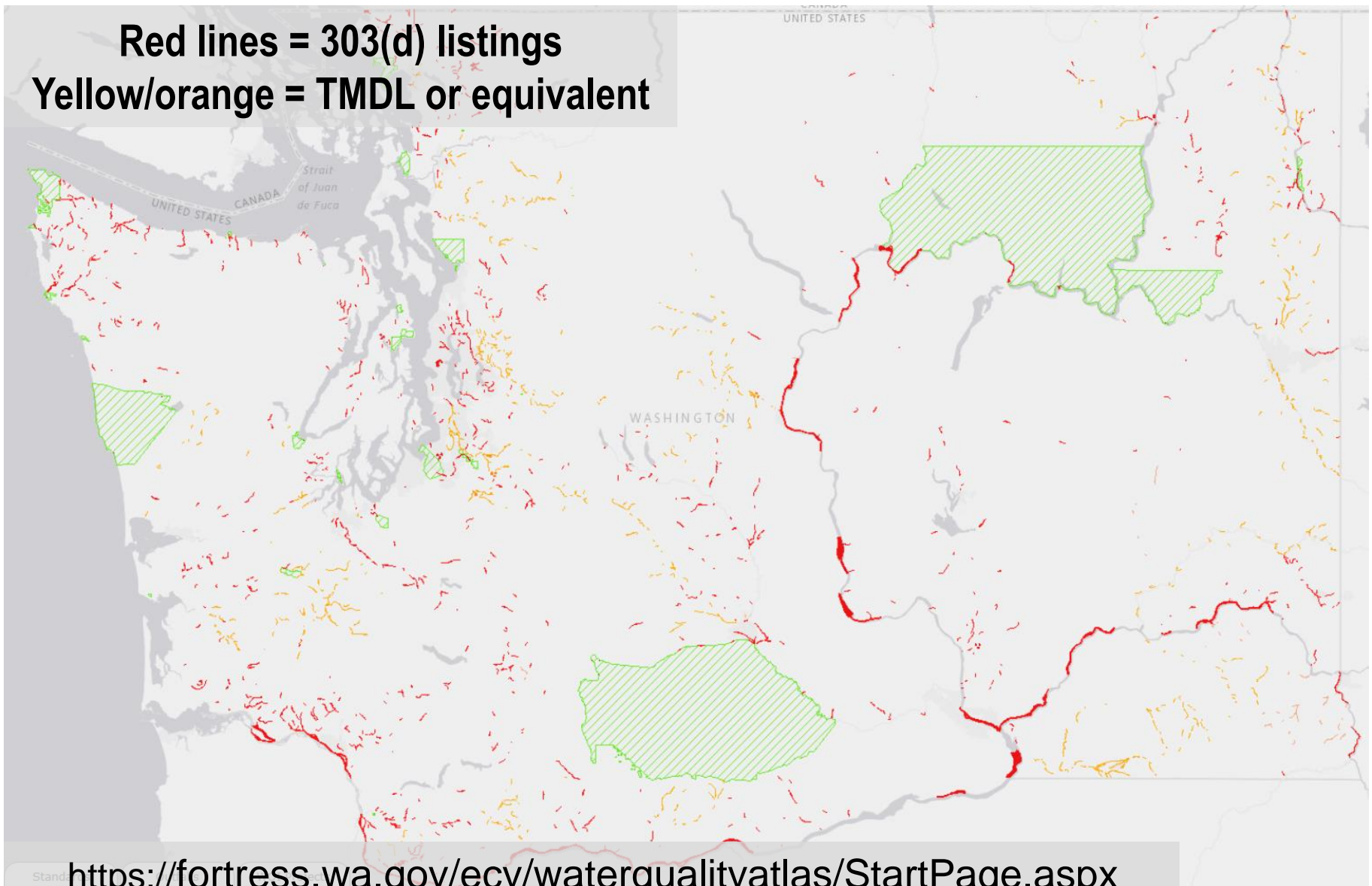
Identify 303(d) Listings (Cat. 5)

Simplified GOAL of 303(d) is a 2-step process:

- Identify waters impairing or suspected of impairing beneficial uses (aquatic life, recreation, etc.)
- Implement and encourage changes that reduce pollution or cleanup the impairment so beneficial uses will be met.

Freshwater Temperature Impairments in WA State

Red lines = 303(d) listings
Yellow/orange = TMDL or equivalent



Temperature Listings* in Forestland Waters

Water Quality Category	Prior Assessment	Current Assessment
# of listings- All categories	1126	1558
# of listings- not meeting temperature criteria 303(d) listed, or have a TMDL or equivalent plan	742 (66%)	1060 (68%)
# of listings- meeting temperature criteria Category 1: criteria are being met	197	231
# of listings- waters of concern Cat. 2: a few violations, but insufficient to list	188	267

* *discrete reaches of a waterbody based on National Hydrography Dataset for which temperature data has been collected*

Summary of Temperature Listings

- About 10% of all waters in WA have been assessed for at least one parameter.
- Temperature is the most common cause of aquatic life use impairment in Washington State.
- The total number of temperature-impaired waters listings in **forestlands** increased by ~43%.
- The relative proportion increased by only 2% (% of impaired listings changed from 66% to 68%).

Reasons for Increase in Listings

- The increase in impaired waters listings largely reflects a large influx of data for waterbodies that previously had insufficient data to assess.
- The percent change in listings from the 2012 Assessment does not tell us whether water quality statewide is getting better or worse.
- The Assessment only identifies waterbody segments with data showing the standards are or are not being met (or has insufficient data to assess).

The Clean Water Act Assurances

- Ecology with support from EPA provided the Clean Water Assurances in Schedule M-2 of the Forests and Fish Report
- The CWA Assurances and the HCP form a package of federal and state assurances – creating more regulatory certainty

What is being Assured?

- TMDLs a low priority until 2009 in watersheds where forest practices are the primary activity affecting WQ
 - TMDLs in mixed-use watersheds -implementation on forest lands will use forest practices rules
- No more stringent CWA requirements will be established prior to July 1, 2009 (unless via AMP)
 - 10 yrs established as check in date on the success of the FP program in moving waters into compliance with CWA
- Ecology's 2009 review extended the assurances contingent on meeting specific corrective milestones

Why Were Assurances Granted?

- Federal and state agencies recognized the FFR prescriptions significantly improved WQ protection, and may meet WQS long term
 - reducing the urgency to develop TMDLs or propose alternative implementation requirements
- A well funded formal AMP was established to test the rules and to expediently adjust them if needed

Questions?

