



# Island County Natural Resources

## WY2024 Surface Water Quality Report Summary



### Introduction

Island County, with a population of around 87,000, highlights a rural lifestyle across its scenic shorelines and watersheds with few centralized wastewater treatment systems.

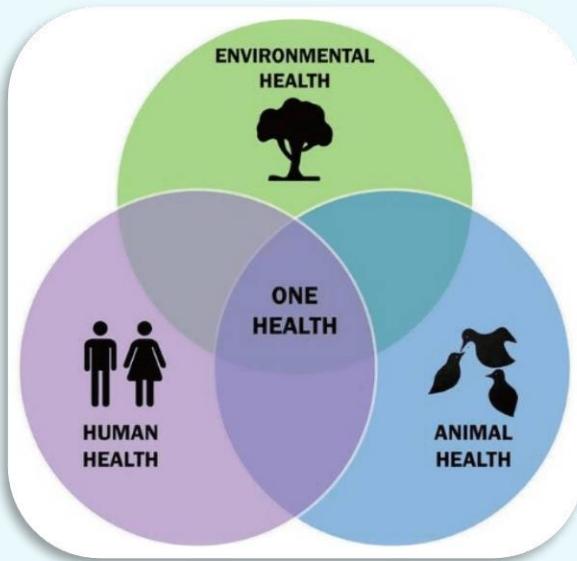
Whidbey & Camano Island encompass more than  
**200** WATERSHEDS

On average, ONLY  
**20%** of U.S. homes utilize septic systems

IN CONTRAST  
**72%** of Island County Residents use septic systems

Since 2006, the Island County Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program (SWQMP) has been safeguarding human health and the environment by assessing water quality within the Water Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) 6.

In its 19th year, the SWQMP conducted extensive water quality monitoring and provided crucial data for the evaluation and planning of future development and environmental conservation projects.



### One Health

One health is a collaborative approach with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes for humans, animals, and ecosystems. A One Health approach recognizes the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and our shared environments.

Protecting the surface water in Island County safeguards those interconnections and ultimately protects the health of all who call this area home.

### Surface Water Quality Monitoring Program Highlights

**48 / 200**

Watersheds monitored across Island County, up 130% from 2023



**MORE THAN 4000**

Staff hours logged



**OVER 550**

Water samples analyzed



**OVER 100**

Source ID samples analyzed with R-cards

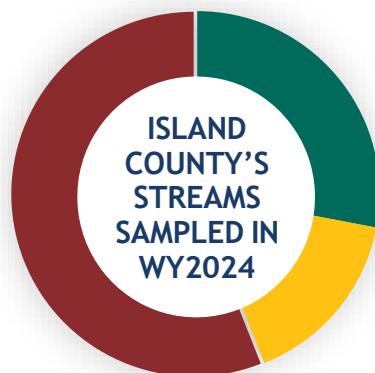
\*Savings of over \$2400 for the county

**MORE THAN 20**

Source ID investigations referred to Adaptive Management

### Results:

#### Stream Health



- 7/25 Met the Water Quality Standard**
- 4/25 Met one part of the Water Quality Standard**
- 14/25 Failed both parts of the Water Quality Standard**



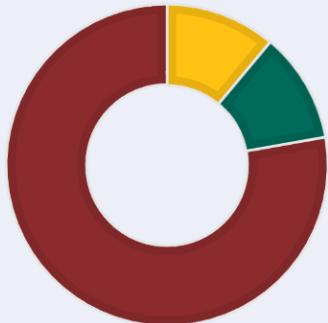
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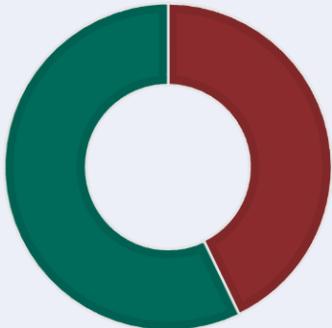
### Water Quality Status

#### North Whidbey Area Results



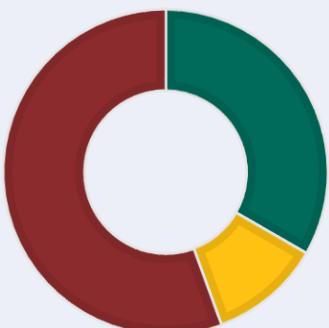
- Ebey's Landing
- Race Lagoon Creek
- E Race Lagoon
- Monroe's Landing
- Ala Spit
- Green Rd
- N Strawberry Point
- Strawberry Pt @Stick
- Crescent Creek

#### South Whidbey Area Results



- N Smugglers Cove
- Glendale Creek
- Scatchet Creek
- Maxwelton Creek
- Goss Creek
- Freeland Park
- Catch Basin
- E Freeland Park

#### Camano Island Results



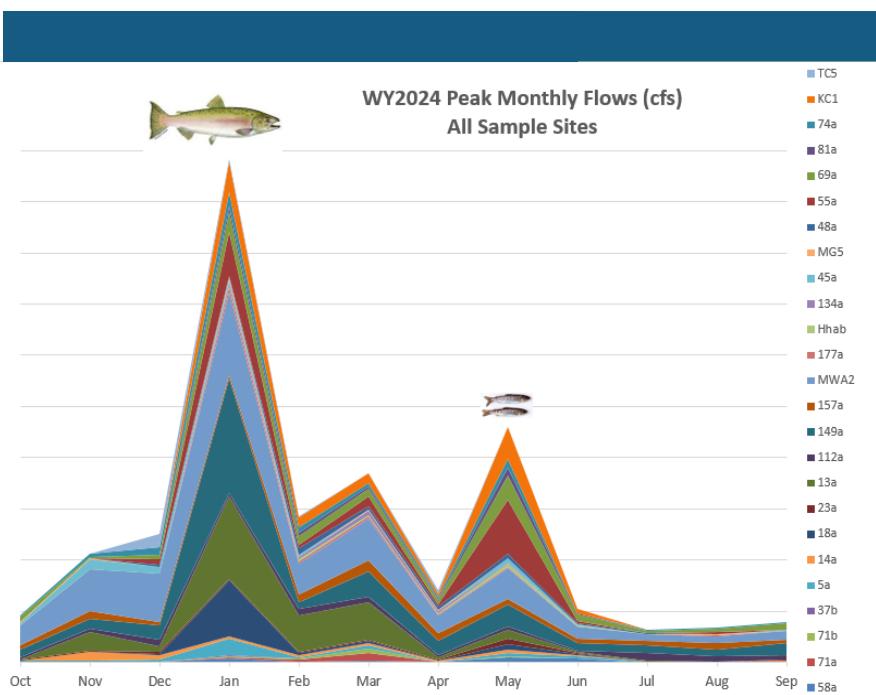
- Poor
- Moderate
- Good

### Stream Discharge

Island County streams flow both seasonally and year-round from smaller upstream waters such as wetlands or springs with added runoff from rainfall or other precipitation.

Seasonal streams provide many benefits; including

- Protect against floods
- Filter pollutants
- Recycle potentially harmful nutrients
- Provide food and habitat for fish and other wildlife.
- Maintain the quality/supply of our drinking water
- Help recharge underground aquifers



The chart above shows how peak flows experienced during WY2024 correspond to historical salmon usage.



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### Water Quality Trends and Adaptive Management Response

Site Name	WY2019	WY2020	WY2021	WY2022	WY2023	WY2024
Ebeys Landing	Poor	Moderate	Good	Poor	Poor	Poor
Race Lagoon Creek*	Good	NA	NA	Poor	Good	Poor
E Race Lagoon*	NA	NA	NA	Poor	Good	Poor
Monroe's Landing*	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	Good
Ala Spit	NA	NA	NA	NA	Moderate	Poor
Green Road	NA	NA	Good	NA	Good	Poor
N Strawberry Point*	NA	NA	NA	NA	Good	Poor
Strawberry Point at Stick Pt	NA	NA	NA	NA	Poor	Poor
Crescent Creek	Moderate	Good	Poor	Moderate	Poor	Moderate
N Smuggler's Cove	NA	NA	NA	NA	Good	Good
Glendale Creek	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Poor	Good	Good
Scatchet Creek	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Poor	Good
Maxwelton Creek	Moderate	Moderate	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor
Goss Creek	NA	NA	NA	NA	Good	Good
E Freeland Park*	Moderate	Moderate	Poor	Poor	Good	Poor
Freeland Park Catch Basin*	Moderate	NA	NA	Moderate	Good	Poor
N. Camano at Nellie	NA	NA	Good	NA	Good	Good
Maple Grove	Poor	NA	NA	NA	Poor	Poor
Sunset Creek	NA	NA	Good	NA	Good	Moderate
Carp Creek	Poor	Good	Good	Good	Poor	Poor
Chapman Creek	Good	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Cama Beach State Park	NA	NA	NA	Good	Good	Poor
Cavalero Creek	Moderate	Moderate	Good	Moderate	Poor	Good
Kristoferson Creek	Good	Good	Good	Moderate	Good	Poor
Barnum Point*	NA	NA	NA	NA	Good	Poor

\*Less than 12 months sampling for WY2024. NA = Not Assessed

### Reconnaissance Monitoring

- Monitoring revealed impairments that were shared with and addressed by the Island County Onsite Septic (OSS) team.
- Investigated complaints of onsite septic failures on Camano and Whidbey Islands.
- Monitoring in areas in anticipation of salmon recovery efforts and restoration projects.



### Source Identification Investigations



#### Monitoring Intensification

Increasing the number and locations of monitoring points upstream and downstream to pinpoint pollution sources.



**Increasing frequency** and timing of monitoring at sample point to pinpoint activity in that location that may be influencing samples.



#### Successes

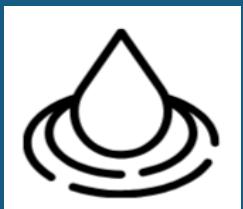
Collaboration with AMAT and OSS team allowed for investigating fecal pollution due to possible onsite septic failures on both Camano and Whidbey Islands.

Outreach and notification letters sent to homes. Resources were shared amongst multiple departments to provide additional information and education to community members.



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### Adaptive Management Action Team (AMAT)



Public Health  
EH & DNR



Planning &  
Community  
Development



Public  
Works



Outside  
Agencies

In addition to Source ID, water quality information was reported and shared with AMAT to determine next steps and corrections using interdepartmental coordination and communication



### Outreach and Education

- Penn Cove Water Festival
- Whidbey Island Fair
- Whidbey 101
- Camano 101
- Sno-Isle Library Nurture Nature Series

### Going Forward

Clean water and watershed health are fundamental for human, livestock, wildlife, and community health. One Health.



WY2024's water quality decline could have been influenced by a number of factors.



This trend may be attributed to factors such as increased development, reduced rainfall, higher temperatures, and failing septic systems. Surface water quality is subject to fluctuations influenced by climate change and population growth.

### Future Initiatives

Enhance monitoring efforts, including storm event analysis to assess the impact of development and pollution on watersheds.



Introduction of new and continued programs focused on:

- Pollution Identification and Correction (PIC)
- Benthic macroinvertebrate surveys
- Stream assessments

