

Effective public commenting



Q: How does the public-comment process work?

A: After drafting a regulatory document (such as a permit, order, or cleanup plan), Ecology issues a public notice to let people know about the proposed document and to ask for public input. The public comment period must last at least 30 calendar days and begins when the notice is published. Ecology reads and considers each comment received during that period and may change the draft document in response to comments. Ecology may publish a response document answering the public's questions.

Q: Why should I comment?

A: This is an opportunity to have your voice heard and influence the decision-making process. You know about your neighborhood, community and local conditions and how Ecology's regulatory proposal may affect them. Although Ecology is bound by existing state and federal laws, your comments can influence how solutions are achieved.

Q: How can I influence Ecology's decision?

A: Put your comments in writing and submit them to the person identified in the public notice before the public comment period ends. You may send your comments by postal mail, e-mail, or hand-deliver them to the address on the public notice. Consider the following points when preparing your comments:

- Review the regulatory document carefully. Know what the subject is and what is being proposed.
- Write comments that are specific, focused and relate to the subject of the document. Refer to section numbers, paragraphs and page numbers of the document in your comments and keep them in order so the reviewer can easily follow your thinking. Explain what you are concerned about. Say "I am concerned about how this will affect small seafood processors because ..." rather than just stating "Don't do this."
- Send your comments to Ecology before the comment period ends.

You may also attend public meetings, workshops and hearings to voice your opinions. Please keep in mind that comments received in writing or through a formal hearing become part of the official record.

Q: What if my issue is with the regulatory law itself?

A: Ecology is bound by state and federal laws. To change the law requires legislative action and/or new rule making. You could pursue the matter with your state or federal representative, as appropriate.