

SUSTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS IN THE BUDGET

The Fundamentals:

We cannot afford to lose the core functions of the environmental protection programs that provide the basic safeguards for our health and economic future.

Toxic contamination cleanup, air quality, water quality, water resources, habitat protection, and transportation are all essential parts of a healthy Washington. Our state's budget decisions should protect our families, communities, and economy.



→WHAT'S AT STAKE

Washington state is in the midst of an economic recession that threatens safeguards upon which we all rely, including the core environmental protections that keep our families and communities healthy. The people of Washington depend on having clean water to drink, unpolluted air to breathe, and the safe and timely cleanup of toxic contaminations. An all-cuts budget imperils all these things and does not reflect the state's values.

→RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Environmental protection programs are a small part of the state budget, but they are critical in terms of ensuring public health, economic opportunity, and quality of life here in Washington. By cutting funding for environmental programs, our state will face more kids with asthma, abandoned toxic sites that won't be cleaned up, and fewer protections for our drinking water.

→BREAKING POINT

Natural resource agencies have already been cut to the bone. Last year, 25 percent of the budgets for natural resource agencies were cut – two times what any other area incurred. Any further reductions will eliminate the agencies' ability to deliver on their basic functions and cost us more down the road to pay for cleanup and recovery.



→THE SOLUTION: A BALANCED APPROACH

Our dual goals are to maintain the environmental protection funding already allocated, while restoring certain unsustainable cuts. To that end, we are working with the broader progressive community to help set the stage for new revenue. It's critical to explore opportunities to restore funds through appropriate user fees to make programs self-sufficient. This will both help ensure environmental protection programs are functional while at the same time freeing up General Fund dollars for other purposes.

About the Environmental Priorities Coalition

Founded in 2003, the Environmental Priorities Coalition is a network of twenty-five leading environmental groups in Washington state that influence policy at the state level. For more information, visit www.environmentalpriorities.org.

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What Cuts to the Core Environmental Protections Mean for Washington's Health and Economic Future



→TOXIC CONTAMINATION

There are almost 10,000 sites in Washington state contaminated with toxic chemicals, heavy metals, oil, gasoline and other pollutants, and we rely on the state to clean them up. Last year, \$180 million was swept from the dedicated toxic clean-up fund and this year another \$81 million was transferred to the General Fund. In light of this, the additional cuts to program functions will prevent sorely needed toxic cleanups from getting underway. In addition, other cuts will slow cleanups on sites statewide and will mean that less of the vital information about toxic threats gets to our local communities.

→AIR QUALITY

The Air Quality Program is an essential investment in public health for Washingtonians. Cuts to this program mean our state will have decreased ability to monitor and reduce the toxic pollution in our air that causes asthma, lung disease, heart disease and cancer. This program is also an essential part of Washington's efforts to combat global warming pollution and develop a clean energy economy to help create thousands of new jobs.

→WATER QUALITY

The Water Quality Program prevents and cleans up water pollution. Further cuts to an already decimated program put at risk our state's ability to limit pollution, meet the minimum requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act, and restore the health of Puget Sound. Other cuts reduce our state's ability to ensure our beaches and waterways aren't contaminated by sewage.



→WATER RESOURCES

Washington State is grappling with a growing water supply crisis – in some areas we don't have enough water to meet increasing demands, streams run dry, and we lack basic information on water use and availability. Moreover, climate change increases uncertainty about our future water supply. The cuts will weaken critical environmental functions including information management of water use and flows, setting minimum in-stream flows, updating water rights through adjudication, and promoting efficiency to prevent wasteful water use.

→HABITAT PROTECTION

Basic science and monitoring for our salmon and more than 200 other threatened species are reduced in the budget and some programs will be effectively eliminated. For example, the Natural Heritage Program provides the basic science and information resources that our state needs to protect rare plants, animals, and ecosystems. These efforts are well underway – eliminating funding at this critical time will set back recovery efforts for years to come.

→TRANSPORTATION

Cuts to the GTEC program directly result in clogged roads and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, at a time when transit ridership continues to be strong, local transit agencies across the state are on the verge of falling off a financial cliff and are looking at 15-25 percent cuts over the next two years. If new local options and state contributions to transit are not identified, Washington residents will be left without transportation choices, which will have a direct impact on increased emissions from the transportation sector.