

PREFACE

This draft Water Resource Inventory Area 1 (WRIA 1) Watershed Management Plan – Phase 1 was developed through the cooperative efforts of local stakeholders and governments under the framework provided by the Washington State Watershed Management Act (RCW 90.82). This version of the WRIA 1¹ Watershed Management Plan (WMP) provides a roadmap for addressing water quantity, water quality, instream flow, and fish habitat challenges faced by residents of WRIA 1 now and in the future, with an initial focus on 2005/2006 activities. Its development was based on four fundamental principals: 1) the use of best available science², 2) public participation, 3) collaborative decision-making, and 4) adaptive management. Abiding by these principles requires that the WMP be viewed as a living document that will evolve and develop over time. Continued refinement of technical information will be necessary both now and in the future to respond to existing and new challenges. For this reason, this version of the WMP is referred to as the WMP – Phase 1. Significant elements of implementing this WMP – Phase 1 include completing and integrating the technical assessment tools described in Section 2 into the WRIA 1 decision-making process and implementing the Bertrand Creek and Middle Fork Nooksack River Instream Flow Pilot Negotiations that are elements of the Instream Flow Selection and Adoption Action Plan. Success in meeting the goals of this WMP is dependent on an on-going commitment to ensure plan implementation, review progress, take corrective action, and respond to new needs.

The WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan – Phase I provides the following information:

- A description of why the WMP was developed and the approach that was used in its development (Section 1);

¹ In 1976, the Washington State Department of Ecology divided the state into 62 water resources inventory areas (WRIAs). WRIA 1 includes the Nooksack River watershed and certain adjacent watersheds including Lake Whatcom.

² For purposes of the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Project, best available science is defined as objective and repeatable analyses based on adequate empirical data collected with appropriate quality assurance/quality control procedures (Memorandum of Agreement, 1998). It is recognized and noted in the WMP - Phase I that achieving best available science is an evolving process dependent upon on-going, long-term data collection and analysis.

- An overview of the actions taken and proposed to build upon and enhance local knowledge about water resource issues and concerns, and to describe the tools being developed to support decision-making regarding management recommendations. This includes a discussion of the interrelationship between the Watershed Planning Process and the resolution of Tribal/Federal reserved water rights and related Treaty-based claims. (Section 2);
- The recommended approach and options for addressing key issues and effectively managing water resources in WRIA 1 (Section 3);
- A description of how the WMP will be implemented and updated including resource considerations (Section 4); and
- A summary of the actions, schedule, and resources needed to implement the WMP (Section 5).

In addition to the Appendices included with the WMP, an expanded glossary of terms and concepts is provided, which can later be used as a companion document. The glossary explains many of the terms referenced in the WMP and has been designed specifically for individuals that may be reading the WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan - Phase 1 that have not been actively involved in the project.

The WMP-Phase I document has been written with a focus on phasing recommended actions. The information presented in this document focuses on actions that can be accomplished within a two-year timeframe (2005/2006) with known or anticipated resources. The actions in this two-year timeframe represent the WRIA 1 Project work plan that will be pursued upon approval of the WRIA 1 WMP - Phase 1 document. Additional program or project design information is provided at the end of many of the recommended programs and projects. This information is provided to facilitate development of future work plans, WMP modifications, and/or program modifications and is not part of 2005/2006 work plan that will move forward upon WMP approval. Inclusion of this additional program design information should not be interpreted to mean that all WRIA 1 participants agree with the content of the additional information. It is further noted that approval of the

WMP Phase I does not constitute approval of the technical work described in Section 2, much of which is still to be completed and will undergo an independent peer review process. Additionally, due to constraints of time and funding, it has not been possible for all Planning Unit members to submit the Watershed Management Plan for complete review by legal counsel. Actions identified for implementation in 2005 and 2006 were selected based on their relative importance and priority, the need to demonstrate on-the-ground results, their ability to inform future actions, and known or likely resource availability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The WRIA 1 Watershed Management Project (WRIA 1 Project) and this associated WMP is the result of extensive work for many years by local and outside participants. Local community members contributed substantial amounts of time and invaluable input through their participation in a multitude of meetings, workshops, and other activities. In particular, caucus participants and their Planning Unit representatives made important contributions throughout the project. Local, State, Tribal, and Federal participants provided substantial staff contributions and direct/indirect funding for the WRIA 1 Project. A very conservative estimate of indirect contributions from staff and community members based on meeting attendance alone is estimated at over 15,000 hours. This does not account for time contributed to review materials, prepare for meetings, follow-up actions, or meet with other caucus members. Whatcom County and the Washington State Department of Ecology played a significant role in direct funding of the WRIA 1 Project through their contributions of approximately \$3.8 million and \$800,000 respectively. The Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe provided essential indirect support by obtaining additional federal funding to supplement the technical work associated with the Project. Whatcom County, with assistance from the City of Bellingham, provided administrative support.

Local and outside consulting expertise was provided by the United States Geological Survey, Utah State University, Parametrix Consulting Firm (subconsultants ECONorthwest and Center for Economic and Business Research), Geneva Environmental, Resolution Services, and Anvil Corporation. The Public Utility District No. 1 of Whatcom County added new temporary staff to support a variety of WRIA 1 Project actions. In addition, several of the governments contracted other technical support services that contributed to the WRIA 1 Project.