

A photograph of a shallow stream with clear, rippling water over a rocky bed. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and the rocks are visible through the clear water. The overall scene is bright and natural.

Skagit County Water Quality Monitoring Program

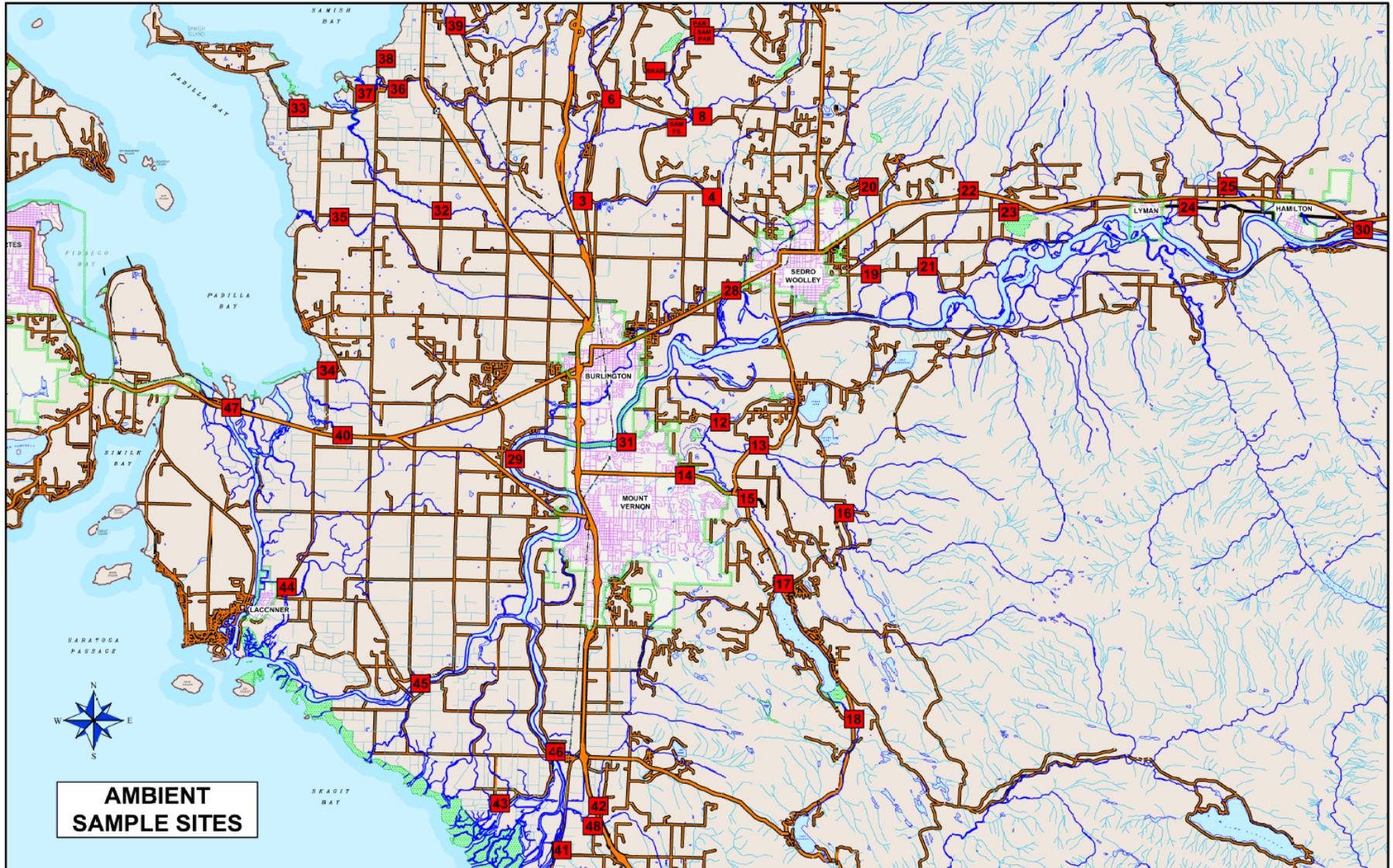
VSP Watershed Committee

February 2015

Water Quality Monitoring Program Basics

- Designed to meet requirements of SCC 14.24.120 – “Ag-CAO”
- 40 sites in Skagit and Samish Basins
 - Map on next slide
- Object is to track WQ trends inside and outside of agricultural areas; find problem areas

Skagit County Monitoring Program Sample Sites



Water Quality Parameters

Factors Affecting Fish

- Dissolved Oxygen
- Temperature
- pH
- Turbidity

Water Quality Parameters

Non-Fish Parameters

- Fecal Coliform bacteria
 - Indicator of human health risk
- Nutrients – Nitrogen and Phosphorus
 - Excess nutrients lead to algae blooms

SCMP Assets

- Generates high-quality & consistent information on the current state of water quality and long-term trends
- Ability to locate areas of substandard WQ
- WQ data is good communication tool with landowners
- Well regarded by state and federal agencies

SCMP Challenges

- Difficult to use WQ data to enforce Ag-CAO
- “Proving” cause-and-effect would take big effort
- WQ trends not unique to ag areas – every watercourse is different



Trends in Skagit County WQ

- As of 2013:
 - Out of 520 trend calculations (13 parameters/40 sites)
 - 32 improving
 - 63 declining
- Declining trends in both Ag and Non-Ag areas

Clean Samish Initiative

- Regular WQ monitoring revealed fecal coliform problem
- Shellfish beds closed during rain events to protect human health
- Continued extensive monitoring documenting improvement

Skagit County WQ Program Summary

- Program generates important information on status and trends of water quality in Skagit County
- Usefulness for Ag-CAO regulation is mixed
 - Good information on trends in ag and non-ag areas
 - Difficult to use WQ information for Ag-CAO enforcement

Questions

- For additional information on Skagit County's Water Quality Monitoring Program, please contact:
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