

RCW 90.48.422 Water quality standards—Compliance methods—

Department authority. (1) The legislature finds that the courts have rendered decisions in Elkhorn (*Public Utility District No. 1 v. Washington Department of Ecology*, 511 U.S. 700, 114 S. Ct. 1900, 128 L.Ed. 2d 716 (1994)) and Sullivan Creek (*Public Utility District No. 1 of Pend Oreille County v. Washington Department of Ecology*, 146 Wn.2d 778, 51 P.3d 744 (2002)) related to water quality certifications issued under section 401 of the clean water act, 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq. Enactment of this legislation does not expand or contract the legal holdings of these decisions and does not affect in any way the application of these holdings to any future case or fact pattern related to water quality certifications issued for federally licensed hydropower facilities under section 401 of the clean water act, 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.

(2) When a water quality standard cannot be reasonably met through the issuance of permits or regulatory orders issued under the authority of this chapter, the department may use voluntary, incentive-based methods including funding of water conservation projects, lease and purchase of water rights, development of new storage projects, or habitat restoration projects in an attempt to meet water quality standards.

(3) The department may not abrogate, supersede, impair, or condition the ability of a water right holder to fully divert or withdraw water under a water right permit, certificate, statutory exemption, or claim granted or recognized under chapter 90.03, 90.14, or 90.44 RCW through the authority granted to the department in this chapter. However, nothing in chapter 15, Laws of 2003 1st sp. sess. shall be construed to affect the department's authority related to the issuance of certifications under section 401 of the federal clean water act, 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq., with respect to the application of federally authorized water quality standards, for federal energy regulatory commission licensed hydropower projects as provided under this chapter and chapter 90.74 RCW. With respect to federal energy regulatory commission licensed hydropower projects, the department may only require a person to mitigate or remedy a water quality violation or problem to the extent there is substantial evidence such person has caused such violation or problem. [2003 1st sp.s. c 15 § 1.]