

RCW 90.44.400 Groundwater management areas—Purpose—Standards—Identification—Designation. (1) This legislation is enacted for the purpose of identifying groundwater management procedures that are consistent with both local needs and state water resource policies and management objectives; including the protection of water quality, assurance of quantity, and efficient management of water resources to meet future needs.

In recognition of existing water rights and the need to manage groundwater aquifers for future use, the department of ecology shall, by rule, establish standards, criteria, and a process for the designation of specific groundwater areas or sub-areas, or separate depth zones within such area or sub-area, and provide for either the department of ecology, local governments, or groundwater users of the area to initiate development of a groundwater management program for each area or sub-area, consistent with state and local government objectives, policies, and authorities. The department shall develop and adopt these rules by January 1, 1986.

(2) The department of ecology, in cooperation with other state agencies, local government, and user groups, shall identify probable groundwater management areas or sub-areas. The department shall also prepare a general schedule for the development of groundwater management programs that recognizes the available local or state agency staff and financial resources to carry out the intent of RCW 90.44.400 through 90.44.420. The department shall also provide the option for locally initiated studies and for local government to assume the lead agency role in developing the groundwater management program and in implementing the provisions of RCW 90.44.400 through 90.44.420. The criteria to guide identification of the groundwater areas or sub-areas shall include but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Aquifer systems that are declining due to restricted recharge or over-utilization;

(b) Aquifer systems in which overappropriation may have occurred and adjudication of water rights has not yet been completed;

(c) Aquifer systems currently being considered for water supply reservation under chapter 90.54 RCW for future beneficial uses;

(d) Aquifers identified as the primary source of supply for public water supply systems;

(e) Aquifers designated as a sole source aquifer by the federal environmental protection agency; and

(f) Geographical areas where land use may result in contamination or degradation of the groundwater quality.

(3) In developing the groundwater management programs, priority shall be given to areas or sub-areas where water quality is imminently threatened. [1985 c 453 § 1.]