

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1670

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Environment, Energy & Technology, March 21, 2025
Ways & Means, April 8, 2025

Title: An act relating to increasing transparency regarding sewage-containing spills.

Brief Description: Increasing transparency regarding sewage-containing spills.

Sponsors: House Committee on Environment & Energy (originally sponsored by Representatives Hunt, Griffey, Doglio, Bernbaum, Zahn, Salahuddin, Berry, Abbarno, Duerr, Hill, Obras, Lekanoff, Stearns, Parshley, Kloba, Reed, Ramel, Ormsby, Gregerson and Nance).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/3/25, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Environment, Energy & Technology: 3/14/25, 3/21/25 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 4/08/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Ecology to establish a public website and create a notification system for providing information about sewage spills.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Shewmake, Chair; Slatter, Vice Chair; Boehnke, Ranking Member; Dhingra, Harris, Liias, Lovelett, MacEwen, Ramos, Short and Wellman.

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Robinson, Chair; Stanford, Vice Chair, Operating; Trudeau, Vice Chair, Capital; Frame, Vice Chair, Finance; Gildon, Ranking Member, Operating; Torres, Assistant Ranking Member, Operating; Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital; Dozier, Assistant Ranking Member, Capital; Boehnke, Braun, Cleveland, Conway, Dhingra, Hansen, Hasegawa, Kauffman, Muzzall, Pedersen, Riccelli, Saldaña, Wagoner, Warnick, Wellman and Wilson, C..

Staff: Jed Herman (786-7346)

Background: The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) sets a national goal to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters and to eliminate pollutant discharges into navigable waters. The CWA sets effluent limitations for discharges of pollutants to navigable waters.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) has received delegated authority from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to carry out the CWA in Washington. As part of this responsibility, Ecology issues required National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Wastewater Discharge Permits, except for federally owned facilities and for permits on tribal lands, as well as State Water Discharge Permits under state law. The NPDES Permits regulate discharges to surface water from commercial industry or publicly owned treatment works, also referred to as municipal wastewater treatment facilities, and State Waste Discharge Permits also regulate discharges to groundwater. Wastewater Discharge Permits generally place limits on the quantity and concentrations of contaminants that may be discharged, and permits may require wastewater treatment or impose operating or other conditions, including monitoring, reporting, and spill prevention planning. The current Water Treatment Plant General Permit issued by Ecology requires a permit holder to notify Ecology immediately, and not later than 24 hours, upon becoming aware of a spill or discharge that could constitute a threat to human health, welfare, or the environment, and to take appropriate action to correct or minimize health or environmental threats from the spill.

Combined sewer overflow systems discharge untreated or partially treated sewage mixed with stormwater to waterways. They receive overflow from treatment plants or combined sewers when the capacity of those treatment plants or combined sewers is exceeded during heavy rain events.

Summary of Bill: By July 1, 2026, Ecology must develop and publish a public-facing website that includes information on locations where sewage spills occur and are reported under Individual Water Quality Permits. Notice on the website must include the following information about the sewage discharge:

- estimated volume or rate of discharge, and final volume discharged;
- level of treatment of the discharge;
- date and time the incident initiated;
- location of the discharge;

- time the discharged ceased;
- geographic area potentially impacted by the discharge; and
- steps taken to contain the discharge.

By July 1, 2027, Ecology must implement a public notification system through which the public may choose to be notified of untreated or undertreated sewage spills. Notification by Ecology must occur no later than four hours, within regular working business hours, after receipt of a notice of a sewage spill.

By March 15, 2026, Ecology must provide a list of sewage spills reported to Ecology during the prior calendar year.

By March 15, 2027, and each March 15th thereafter, Ecology must publish and make publicly available on the website an annual report of sewage spills that occurred during the prior calendar year that were reported to Ecology.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Environment, Energy & Technology): PRO: There are hundreds of sewage spills in our state every year. This bill would provide information to the public. With this bill we will be able to avoid people being surprised by sewage spills and the bill gives the public information that they can use to advocate for clean water. Clean and sanitary water is important for all people and salmon. This will give people more. For the health and well-being of our waterways it is vital that this bill sees support in the Senate. We need some sunlight on the sewage spill problem. This will let communities make better decisions regarding their waterways.

OTHER: The bill as written will require us to post information, build a webpage with prescribed information, and post the information and send announcements. We would also create an annual report. Ecology is committed to providing more transparent information.

Persons Testifying (Environment, Energy & Technology): PRO: Representative Victoria Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Miguela Marzolf, Seattle Aquarium; Sean Dixon, Puget Soundkeeper.

OTHER: Leslie Connelly, Department of Ecology.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Environment, Energy &

Technology): No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): No public hearing was held.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): N/A

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): N/A