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Water Resources Planning in the Spokane Watershed, Washington

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Water Resource Planning in the Spokane Watershed, Washington

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The Spokane-Coeur d'Alene Watershed drains about 6600 square miles of northern Idaho and eastern Washington. The Spokane River begins as the outflow of Lake Coeur d'Alene, and flows through a valley filled with glacial outburst flood deposits that form the Spokane Aquifer, the sole source for drinking water for nearly 400,000 people.

Watershed Planning efforts are underway in the four Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs) that comprise the Spokane River watershed in Eastern Washington. Two of the WRIAs include the drainage areas of two main tributaries, Hangman Creek and the Little Spokane River. Authorized and funded by the Watershed Planning Act in 1998, planning units are assessing current and future water needs, and trying to meet the growing needs for domestic, commercial, and industrial water supplies, while protecting instream resources. In the Spokane watershed we are also addressing flow-related water quality issues and habitat needs for rainbow trout and mountain whitefish.

The planning units are coordinating with several other processes addressing water concerns, including FERC Relicensing for five hydroelectric projects, a dissolved oxygen clean-up plan (TMDL), and a major aquifer study.