

## **Washington State Lake Protection Association (WALPA) statement in support of SB 5486/ HB 1635: Requiring a comprehensive lakes management strategic plan.**

Due to the lack of a statewide coordinated program, the *de facto* approach during the past several years has been to manage problems on a lake by lake basis, funded by grants obtained by the most successful legislators for their perspective districts. Many of these projects have resulted in successful lake restorations, but several grants of questionable scientific, restoration, or protection value have been funded as well. This approach sometimes provides local benefit in the void created by the lack of a statewide program, but works against the creation of a broader statewide program. It is irresponsible to manage a valuable resource in this piecemeal fashion via lawsuits and legislation driven by user conflicts.

Recent projects have largely, if not exclusively, focused on nutrient control. Although nutrient control remains a primary concern in lakes across Washington, there are other issues that require a much broader view than can be effectively addressed on an individual lake or watershed basis. Issues of climate change, biodiversity, invasive species, endocrine disrupting compounds and toxic cyanobacteria require at least a statewide, or even broader geographic approach.

The issue of conflicting needs or lost opportunities is also critical to lakes. Because there is no program specific to lakes, opportunities are lost to protect them and they are not considered when deciding on activities or legislation that impacts them. The State has taken on a huge watershed planning effort in the past 10 years, but those plans are nearly silent on lake quality and protection issues. The proposed NPDES stormwater permits have a large state mandated monitoring component that has the possibility of significant impacts on the financial and logistical capabilities of local jurisdictions. But the focus of the mandated monitoring in the proposed permits is not in the receiving waters, which are specifically excluded from the required monitoring. This new, unfunded monitoring requirement is driving local work planning to reduce local funds and resources available for lake and stream monitoring. There is a current opportunity to realize some real efficiencies and coordination if the NPDES stormwater program is modified to address receiving water impacts. Lakes are directly impacted by stormwater and should be considered for inclusion in the required monitoring.

Technology and financing are often not available for watershed pollution controls. Long-term watershed solutions, even if fully implemented, will in all probability lag behind the impacts of urbanization. This focus and lag time are institutionalized in the TMDL process with money focused on restoration instead of protection.

In summary, Washington requires a comprehensive and effective statewide lake program to identify and address lake issues, set legislative and research priorities, and support local lake protection efforts. Long term watershed solutions alone are not enough if they are carried out in only the local context. Many other states with far fewer aquatic resources than Washington have far more extensive lake protection programs. Washington needs a coordinated program that will provide the scientific and legislative tools to protect and enhance the quality of Washington's lakes. This program will only enjoy the broad citizen and legislative support necessary if the protection and recovery of Washington's lakes are placed into the broader context of protecting the shared resources of our State, and that effort is coordinated across ecoregions.