Watershed planning from a water utility perspective

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Why utilities need watershed planning

- Legal obligation to serve customers
- Need predictable, adequate water supply
- Need long-term planning in sync with growth management
Utilities’ history with watershed planning

• At the table from the beginning… examples:
  • Chelan Agreement (1990)
  • Watershed Planning Act in RCW 90.82 (1997-98)
  • Mixed record of wins and losses
Hard lessons learned

• Patience and persistence required
• Planning table must be inclusive
• Planning product must pass muster in court (e.g. Foster, Swinomish, Hirst rulings)
ESSB 6091: Today’s watershed planning

- Mainly about mitigating permit-exempt wells – response to Hirst ruling
- Not aimed at utilities’ water needs
- Exception: Secs. 301-303 response to Foster ruling
Foster Task Force in ESSB 6091

• Foster ruling: strict “water for water, in-time and in-place” mitigation requirement

• Legislative task force and five pilot projects to explore broader, “sequenced” mitigation options
Foster Task Force In ESSB 6091

- Under review: in-kind and out-of-kind mitigation for net environmental benefit
- Still a work in progress but utilities hopeful