

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

2016 OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD



Buck Smith receives this year's AWRA-WA Service Award for "Outstanding Contribution to Washington's Water Resources"

Buck Smith is a Senior Hydrogeologist with a long history in water resources, including recently celebrating his 25th anniversary with Ecology's Northwest Regional Office section of the Water Resources Program. Buck's passion for water resources began early on. As a young man, Buck worked as a whitewater raft guide and saw how water resource decisions, such as the damming of the Stanislaus River in California, can have impacts on a wide variety of stakeholders.

At Ecology, Buck has piloted innovative, interdisciplinary water resources solutions in the most densely populated, and some of the most agriculturally valuable, regions of Washington. For example, when Buck started working in Whatcom County for Ecology in 1991, he found significant unpermitted water use. To address this, Buck spent years meeting with and educating landowners on water law, identifying innovative tools such as the annual consumptive quantity (ACQ) calculation to better align a farmer's historic and current water uses and needs. He championed legislation to address legal barriers that penalized farmers for water use efficiencies associated with the change from dairies to berry cultivation. Because of his work, Whatcom farmers are now more legally secure and better understand their impacts on fisheries. Many farmers have switched from surface water to less impactful groundwater withdrawals. As the regional Ecology Trust Water Right Program lead, he also shepherded the first permanent trust water right acquisition in northwestern Washington. The agreement secured critical instream flows for Cascade Creek, which originates in Moran State Park on the flank of Mount Constitution.

The full breadth of Buck's impact on Washington's water resources is impossible to quantify. Beyond his professional accomplishments and contributions to State water resources science and policy, his legacy is visible among a generation of water resources professionals that have come up under his tutelage.

Buck is generous with his time and holds nothing back. Drawing on his encyclopedic institutional knowledge, Buck's mentorship spans the nuances of permit-writing, compliance, mitigation evaluation, hydrogeology, policy, and case law. To date, three Ecology Water Resources Program section managers have emerged from beneath Buck's wings, and many more of his "students" continue to carry the water resources torch, both inside and outside the agency.

We applaud Buck Smith for his accomplishments.