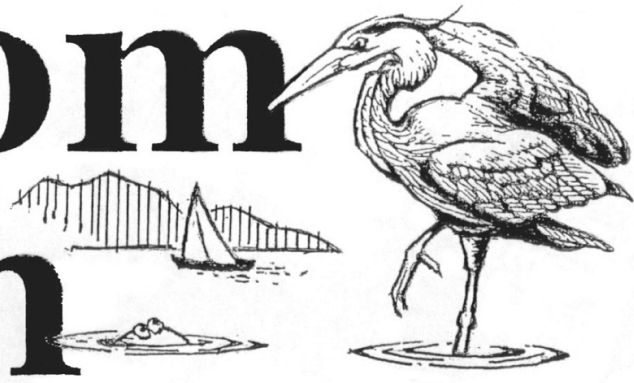


# Whatcom Watch



a community forum on government, environmental issues and media • [www.whatcomwatch.org](http://www.whatcomwatch.org)

Volume 34, Number 8

In print since 1992

August 2025

## Statewide Ban on English Ivy Sales Is Approved, Benefitting Everyone

by Michael Feerer

The news is filled with governmental decisions, particularly at a federal level, that will negatively impact Washington's environment. It can feel both distressing and depressing. But I'm delighted to tell you about a very recent decision that will positively affect nearly all communities, forests, and habitats in Whatcom County and throughout much of Washington — for decades to come.

First, I'll cut to the chase and reveal the decision. Then I'll back up and explain why it's important, how we got there, and what else can be done to continue the momentum.

### It Happened in Olympia

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) (1), after an almost two-year administrative process that culminated in July 2025, added English ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Atlantic/Boston ivy (*Hedera hibernica*) to their Prohibited



Residents jumping for joy over removed ivy.

photo: Lexie Bright

Michael Feerer founded Whatcom Million Trees Project in 2021. After leading WMTP as Executive Director for four years, he recently shifted to the WMTP Board and continues to work on special projects for the nonprofit. A voracious reader, granddad, and biker, he's walked in nature the equivalent of 1.6 times around Earth.

Plants and Seeds list (2). (I'll refer herein to these two ivies as "English ivy" for simplicity.)

This WSDA list has clout. It determines which harmful plants are prohibited from being sold, transported, or distributed in Washington state.

Effective August 9, 2025, all nurseries, box stores, wholesalers, and other plant merchants within our wonderful state

will no longer be able to stock or sell these highly damaging ivies. These two ivies are prematurely killing thousands of trees within Whatcom County and tens (possibly hundreds) of thousands of trees statewide.

Washington will become the second state in the nation to enact such a ban. Oregon was the first, in 2010. Although a sales ban alone will not eliminate the

immense ivy problem, it will play an important role in gradually diminishing this destructive nonnative plant.

As a result, urban trees as well as rural forests will live longer and stronger to continue to capture carbon, support habitat and biodiversity, reduce urban heat, buffer floods, help our mental and physical well-

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## Troubled Waters: Stormwater Bacteria Counts Stir Up Concerns

by Luisa Loi

Editor's Note: Whatcom Watch has entered a cooperative agreement with Salish Current. When possible, we will share each other's content. Salish Current, an online-only news organization, covers the North Sound area and Whatcom Watch

Luisa Loi is a freelance reporter for Salish Current. After graduating from Western Washington University in 2022, she wrote for the Whidbey News-Times and Whatcom Watch. She mostly enjoys writing about the environment, social issues and people with unique stories, crafting, exploring the Pacific Northwest and finding her next binge-able TV show.

mainly covers Whatcom County issues. Visit <https://salish-current.org>.

### Part I

High bacteria counts in stormwater are prompting concerns, as volunteer citizen scientists walk Anacortes and Bellingham shores to help track outfall water quality.

During a routine sampling session in Bellingham Bay last month, a team of citizen scientists came across a stream of brown, frothy and poop-smelling water flowing from the Olive Street stormwater outfall, located just north of Boulevard Park.

Upon analyzing the sample, research-

ers found *E. coli* bacteria levels so high that they exceeded the safety threshold by over 50 times, RE Sources shared in an Instagram post.

Kirsten McDade, a pollution expert who leads four stormwater teams for the nonprofit, said the city is currently conducting a DNA test to identify the source.

Every month, groups of volunteer citizen scientists walk the shores of Bellingham and Anacortes to collect samples of untreated water from outfalls and creek mouths with the goal of keeping track of any changes in water quality.

### Stormwater Monitoring Program

This work is part of a growing effort known as the Stormwater Monitoring Program, an initiative of Friends of the Salish Sea. The environmental nonprofit, based in Anacortes, has been taking samples from eight cities in the region that are covered by a Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit, which regulates the discharge of stormwater from moderately sized cities.

The findings are then shared with the cities, which will work to investigate and mitigate the contamination, though contaminated stormwater is one of the most

difficult forms of pollution to prevent.

"We're trying to be the first boots on the ground," Shannon Valderas, the Stormwater Monitoring Program's project coordinator, said about the nonprofits.

As stated in RE Sources' report, stormwater also represents the greatest source of pollution in the sea, where it introduces bacteria, chemicals and sediment.

These contaminants — which can come from unscooped pet poop, leaked motor oil, fertilizer and other substances — get swept by the rains and fast-tracked from hard surfaces like streets, roofs and even lawns, where soil and plants

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