



Cost Reimbursement Overview

3rd Annual - Water Law in Eastern Washington

Dave Christensen, Water Resources Deputy Program Manager
May 27, 2026

Our Mission

We manage water resources to benefit all Washingtonians and to protect the natural environment for current and future generations



Communities

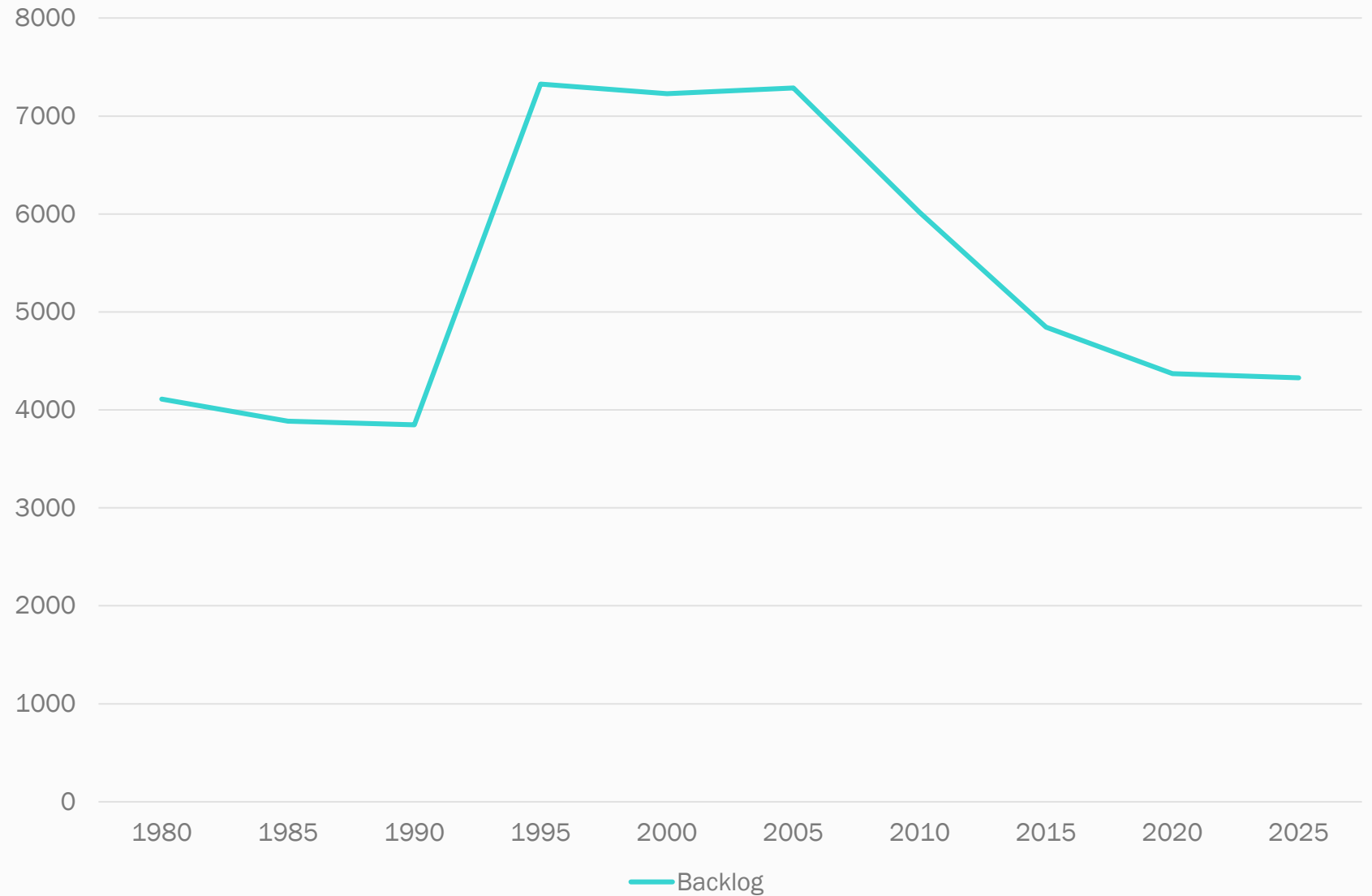


Irrigators



Environmental
Protection

Permit Application Backlog



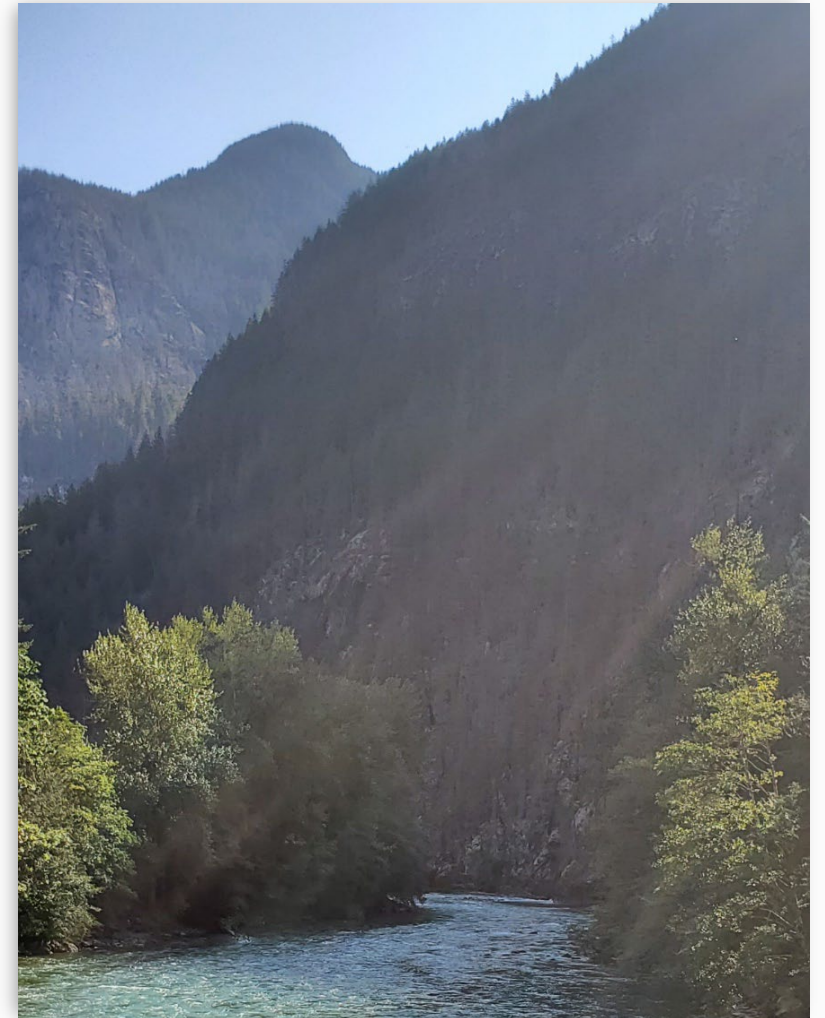
Cost-Reimbursement - authorities

- Authorized under RCW 43.21A.690 and RCW 90.03.265 (passed in 2010).
- Applicants pay consultants **who work for Ecology** and also pay Ecology staff time for review.
- Ecology reviews for accuracy and completeness.
- Ecology makes the final decision.



Cost Reimbursement Consultant Master Agreement with Ecology

- Each of the Cost Reimbursement Consultants enters into a master agreement with Ecology.
- This master agreement sets the expectations for being a Cost Reimbursement Consultant.
- No payment is received by the Cost Reimbursement Consultants from Ecology for being under the master agreement.



Cost Reimbursement Consultant Pool

- Prime Consultants Currently in the Pool (Ending June 30, 2026)
 - Aspect Consulting, (Geosyntec)
 - GeoEngineers, Inc.
 - GSI Water Solutions, Inc.
 - Landau Associates, Inc.
 - Mott MacDonald, LLC
 - RH2 Engineering, Inc.
 - Terraphase Engineering
 - Water & Natural Resource Group, Inc.



Cost Reimbursement Successful Bidders

Apparent Successful Bidders for Cost Reimbursement Consultant Pool
(Starting approximately July 1, 2026, and could last 6 years)

- American Land and Water Consulting, LLC
- Associated Earth Sciences, Inc.
- Canyon Environmental Group, LLC
- GeoEngineers, Inc.
- Geosyntec Consultants, Inc.
- Groundwater Solutions, Inc.
- Landau Associates, Inc.
- RH2 Engineering, Inc.
- Strata Geosciences
- Terraphase Engineering, Inc.
- Water & Natural Resource Group, Inc.

Cost Reimbursement Agreement (CRA)

- The CRA is an agreement between the Applicant and Ecology.
- Under RCW 90.03.265(5)(a), Ecology may recover its costs related to:
 - Review of consultants;
 - Management of consultant contracts and cost-reimbursement agreements;
 - Review of work products provided by participating consultants.
- Cost-reimbursement agreements, “must not negatively impact the processing of other permit applications” RCW 43.21A.690(4). Ecology’s hourly rate includes direct Ecology staff costs and staff replacement costs to ensure that requirement is met.
- Payment can be either full up-front, or by submitting a retainer and then paying as invoiced.
- Typically, the CRA must be in place before any work on an application can proceed.

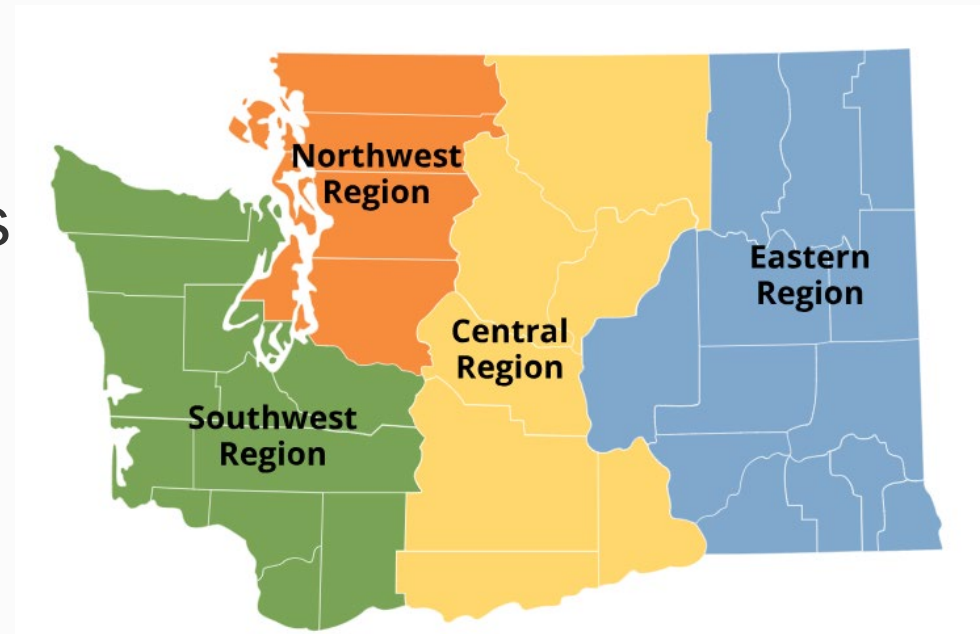
Important details

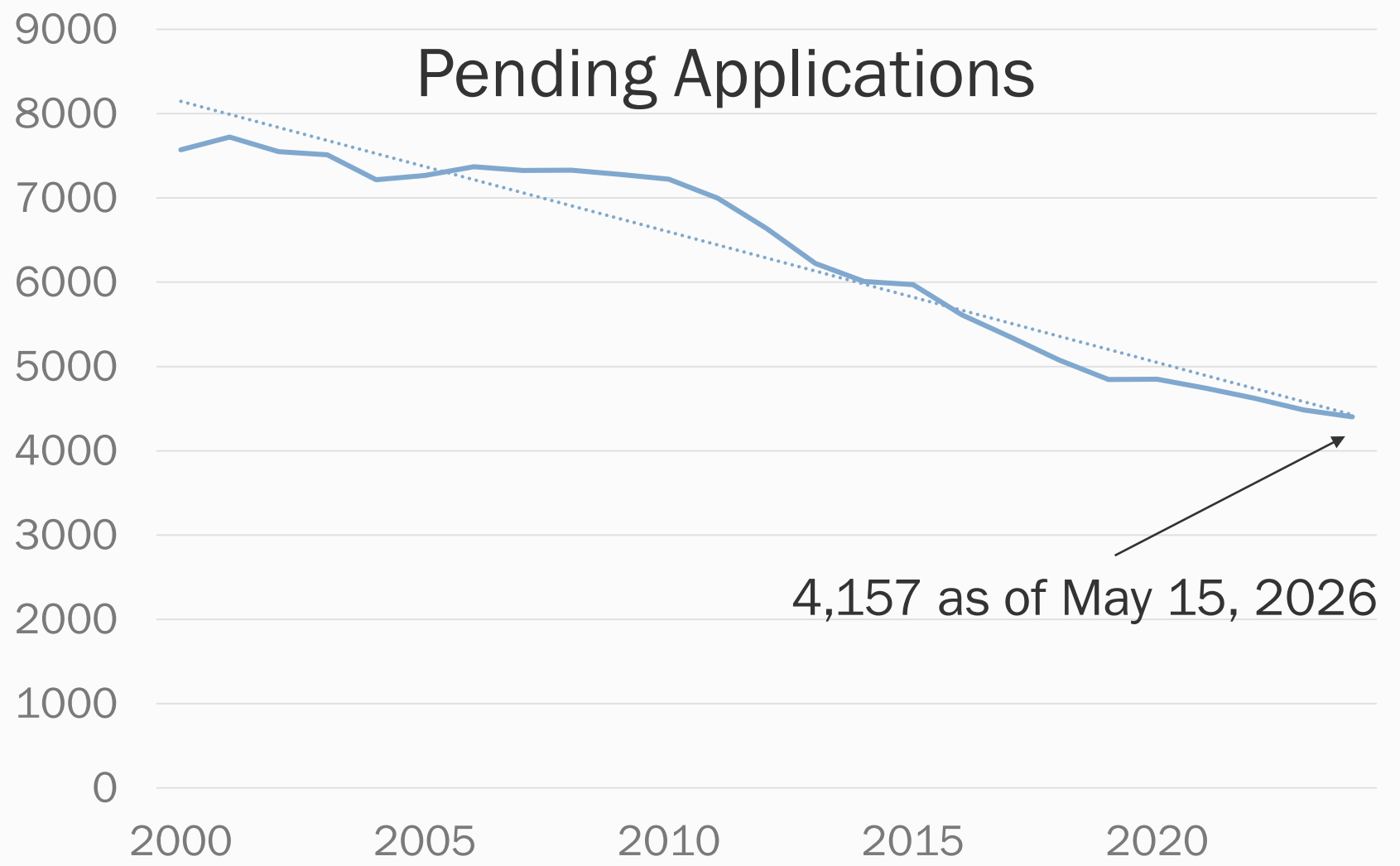
- Ecology has discretion on whether to allow an application to be processed through this pathway.
- Standard water right processing rules apply.
- For a particular source of supply, any senior applications must be processed before a junior application.*
- Applicants are not paying to “jump the line.”
- The applicant is paying for a decision, not necessarily for an approval.
- The department retains full authority to amend, refuse, or approve any work product provided by any consultant - RCW 90.03.265(5(a)).



Cost Reimbursement Coordinators

- Each Ecology Region has a Cost Reimbursement Coordinator
 - Central Region Office – Andrea Reyes
 - Eastern Region Office – Molly Davis
 - Northwest Region Office – Michele Curtis
 - Whatcom County – Jess Yates
 - Southwest Region Office – Mary Jones
- Headquarters Grants and Contracts Coordinator
 - Amy Pearson



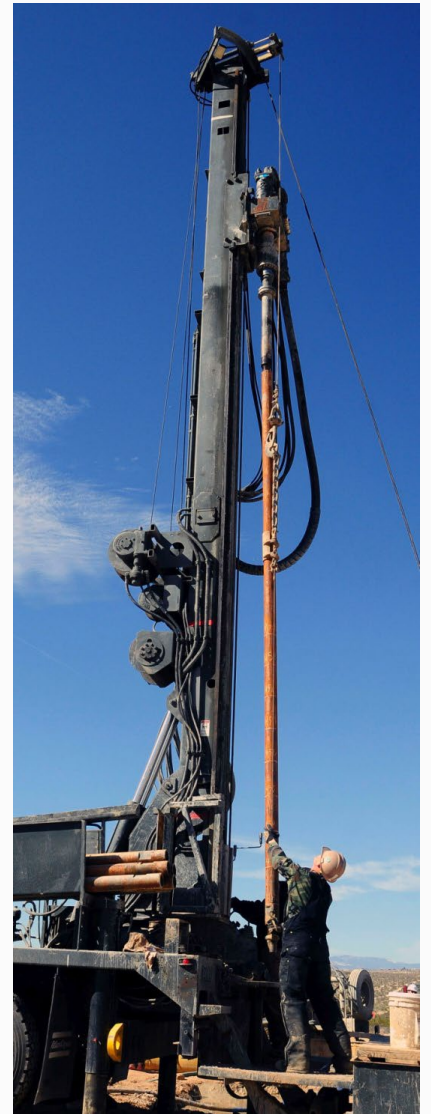


Water Right Permit Backlog

* Average time from application to decision: ~17 years

Cost Reimbursement Steps

- Applicant submits a complete water right application to Ecology.
- Applicant and Ecology enter into a cost reimbursement agreement (CRA).
- The cost reimbursement agreement will either be Phase I or Phase 2.
 - For Phase I - Cost Reimbursement Consultant prepares a pre-processing report.
 - For Phase II - Cost Reimbursement Consultant processes the water right application.
- Ecology reviews all work done by the Cost Reimbursement Consultant and ultimately makes any final decisions.



Thank you – Next: Andy

Dave Christensen
Water Resources Deputy Program Manager
Email: dave.christensen@ecy.wa.gov

