



The Natural Heritage Program provides the basic science and information resources that our state needs to protect rare plants, animals, and ecosystems.

Washington's wild places and open spaces are central to our economy, culture and traditions. Our lands and waters are the source for our clean water and air, bountiful fish and wildlife, and incredible recreation.

Basic science and monitoring for our salmon and more than 200 other threatened species have been cut and some programs will be effectively eliminated. The efforts of the Natural Heritage Program are well underway – eliminating funding at this critical time will set back recovery efforts for years to come.

“As a botanist and wetland biologist employed by private industry, I rely on data collected by the Natural Heritage Program as well as the technical expertise of its staff. The proposed cuts could affect accurate analysis of construction, restoration, and development projects across the state. Once the centralized ability to gather, distribute, and track this data is lost it may take years to recover.”

Jeff Walker,
biologist, Seattle

The Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center (GTEC) program is one of the most cost-effective programs to reduce drive alone trips in our urban areas.

Washington residents and employers alike depend upon transit. In the last four years, Puget Sound regional transit ridership grew by 24%, vastly outpacing population growth and employment growth.

At a time when transit ridership continues to be strong, local transit agencies across the state are on the verge of falling off a financial cliff and are looking at 15-25% cuts over the next two years. Without additional transit, congestion will immobilize our economy and impede access to jobs.

Transit systems also generate positive health benefits – helping riders stay more physically fit and decreasing heart disease. Additionally, using mass transit reduces air pollution, which contributes to heart and lung disease.

“Transit is a crucial component for concentrating growth, protecting our natural resources, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions statewide. Investing in transit and creating walkable communities is the most efficient way to spend public infrastructure dollars in these tough economic times. As an Eastside resident I take the bus frequently to go to meetings or community events and I would hate to see my transit service cut.”

Roberta Lewandowski,
urban planner, Mercer Island

Why environmental protections matter for Washington's health, families, and future.

The State plays a critical role in protecting the environment to ensure the long term health of Washington's families, communities, and economy. Environmental protection programs make up a small percentage of the state budget, but they are critical in terms of public health, economic opportunity, and quality of life in Washington.

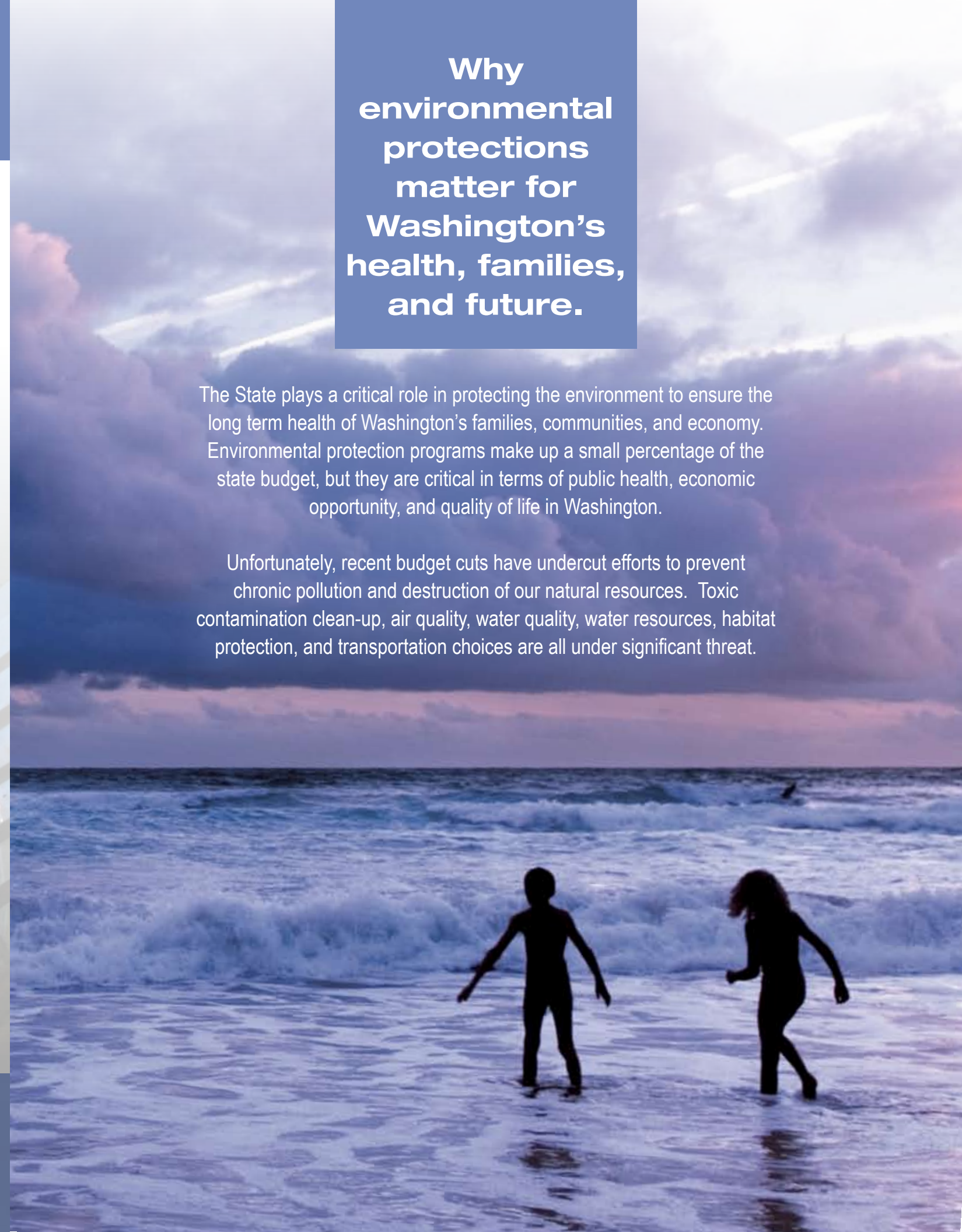
Unfortunately, recent budget cuts have undercut efforts to prevent chronic pollution and destruction of our natural resources. Toxic contamination clean-up, air quality, water quality, water resources, habitat protection, and transportation choices are all under significant threat.

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The state's Toxic Contamination Cleanup Program works to ensure that toxic contamination sites are cleaned up to protect Washingtonians' health and safety.

There are almost 10,000 sites in Washington state contaminated with toxic chemicals, heavy metals, oil, gasoline and other pollutants – posing a serious risk to public health, most particularly to our children. We rely on the state to clean up these toxic sites. Risks from contaminated sites include:

- Children ingesting contaminated soil and dust through actions as commonplace as dropping a toy, picking it up, and putting it in their mouth.
- Contamination of fish and shellfish from water containing toxic chemicals.
- Contaminated groundwater posing serious health risks to those who use it for drinking, cooking, and bathing.

Massive cuts to the Toxic Contamination Cleanup Program will prevent sorely needed toxic cleanups from getting underway throughout the state. Already, 13 toxic contamination sites including the Lower Duwamish River, Camp Bonneville near Vancouver, Irondale Beach Park in Jefferson County, and the Spokane River are being halted or delayed.

“I’m concerned for the safety of my students that spend time outside by the Duwamish River. They shouldn’t have to put their health at risk in order to enjoy the parks near the river.”

*Garrison Dyer,
middle school teacher, Tukwila*

The state's Water Quality Program prevents and cleans up water pollution.

We rely on safeguards to keep our water clean and safe to drink. Yet, about one-third of Washington's waters are too polluted to meet state water quality standards.

Further cuts to an already decimated Water Quality Program put at risk our state's ability to limit pollution, our ability to meet the minimum requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act, and our commitment to restore the health of Puget Sound. Other cuts reduce our state's ability to ensure our beaches and waterways aren't contaminated by sewage.

Water contamination also threatens the viability of industries like the shellfish growers. For example, shellfish industry jobs in Mason County are threatened as shellfish growing areas face closures due to water quality problems.

“As state and local funding dries up for water quality programs, our ability to solve water quality problems is greatly diminished. With a number of shellfish growing areas currently restricted for harvest and more threatened with downgrades, the consequences could be disastrous for shellfish growers.”

*Bill Dewey,
shellfish grower, Shelton*

The state's Air Quality Program monitors air pollution to make sure our air is clean and healthy to breathe.

Air pollution can cause or worsen health conditions such as asthma, heart and lung diseases, stroke, and lung cancer. Cuts to the state's Air Quality Program put Washingtonians, particularly children, at higher risk of asthma and lung cancer. Approximately 1,100 people die each year due to fine air particle pollution in our state. The costs of air pollution-related diseases alone for citizens, businesses and state health care institutions in Washington total nearly \$190 million each year.

Five areas in the Pacific Northwest, including Tacoma and northwest Pierce County, currently do not meet federal standards for clean air. Cuts to the Air Quality Program will make it harder to these areas to improve their air quality to healthy standards.

“As a pediatric nurse in Tacoma, I see our kids suffering because of our low air quality nearly every day. We should be doing more – not less – to make sure our air isn't making our children sick.”

*Nicole Makula,
registered nurse, Tacoma*

Washington must find a way to do more to maintain basic protections which provide us with clean air, clean water, and a healthy place to live.

The Water Resources Program and Watershed Health Grant Program ensure Washington is meeting current water needs and that water is available in the future for people, fish and the natural environment.

The Water Resource Program budget and watershed health grants have been slashed. These cuts mean less information to make responsible water management decisions, a lack of accountability to stop wasteful or illegal water use and fewer resources to ensure healthy watersheds for fish, farms, and communities.

“In an over-allocated basin with unprecedented growth, the Yakima Watershed faces complicated challenges. Water shortages occur here with increasing frequency. Massive efforts have been underway to create solutions to these problems and protect our most precious resource. Cuts to Ecology's Water Resource Program would only exacerbate conflicts between growth, agriculture and in-stream needs.”

*Melissa Bates,
small farmer, Cle Elum*