
Impact

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and eComments is now used for all comment periods at Ecology¹. The benefit to the people of Washington has been:

- Greater transparency: it's easy to post comments received so that anyone can read them.
- Consistency: there is now a single way for managing comment period input.
- Efficiency: fewer steps and less manual processing.

Table 1. Amount of comment management time reduced by eComments

Staff activity	Before eComments	With eComments
Build an online comment form	A few days	Less than 1 hour
Review and organize comments	Up to 9 weeks	A week or less
Post comments online	A few days	Less than 1 hour
Produce a contact list	All day	A few minutes
Provide comments for public disclosure requests	All day	Less than 1 hour

The people of Washington now:

- Have a consistent online form for submitting comments.
- x Can submit comments on a computer, laptop, tablet, or smart phone.
- x Can view comments submitted as soon as they are posted and after the comment period has ended, meeting Washington state OCIO Policy 187 for Open Data.

Ecology now has:

- A consistent process and tools.
- Efficient comment tracking and reporting.
- Efficient ways to collect, review, and respond to comments.
- Detailed, complex reports with comments and summaries in minutes.
- The ability to easily search, summarize, and recognize duplicate comments.
- A dashboard for each project, with highlights about comments received.

Conclusion

Our new electronic comment system has delivered powerful results. We have a reliable system that significantly reduced processing time. We now focus more on the meaningful work of considering, evaluating, and responding to comments, which means we are better able to protect, preserve and enhance the environment for current and future Washingtonians.

¹ There are a few exceptions: for example, when comments are submitted to a partner agency (usually a county).