

## Water Quality Policy

### Who Made it?

The RSBOJC Water Quality Policy was developed with support and input from local landowners, SVID and RID staff and Directors, as well as representatives from local, state and federal environmental agencies. The policy was adopted by the RSBOJC Board.

### Will it Work?

Landowners have implemented soil erosion Best Management Practices (BMPs) and the turbidity has cleared significantly since 1997. The key is to be pro-active. If landowners and irrigation districts do not meet state and federal water quality standards, agencies may implement stricter methods of regulatory enforcement.

### Will it Affect the Landowner?

Landowners are being asked to enter a partnership with RSBOJC. The goal is to have each landowner minimize return flows and clean up the irrigation water leaving their property.

Livestock grazing on project waterways is prohibited. A no-till zone, typically 20 feet, shall exist on both sides of an open project waterway.

## What is Turbidity?

Turbidity is a measure of water clarity. The unit of this measurement is Nephelometric Turbidity Units, or NTUs.

### Water Quality Targets

<u>Year</u>	<u>Turbidity</u>
1999	2000 NTU
2000	1000 NTU
2001	500 NTU
2002-2009	400 NTU
2010-2024	300 NTU
<b>Goal Date?</b>	<b>25 NTU</b>

### 2024 On-Farm Targets

SVID and RID Supervisors will sample On-Farm runoff where it enters the RSBOJC project waterway(s), such as a canal, lateral, drain, joint drain, or wasteway. One sample over 300 NTU will be a violation and immediate corrective action must be taken by the landowner.

If your supply is reduced because of a violation, you must first meet 150 NTU before your supply is fully restored.



Roza-Sunnyside Board of Joint Control  
(RSBOJC)



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### 2024 Water Quality Policy

“We like to pride ourselves on being the true environmentalist. If we are going to talk the talk, we’d better walk it.”

Douglas Simpson

## Background

In 1996, the Roza Irrigation District and the Sunnyside Division formed a Board of Joint Control (RSBOJC) in response to the 1992-1994 droughts. Together, the two organizations are working to improve water supply, water quality, and management.

## Why Improve Water Quality?

There are two primary driving forces behind the push for improving water quality: the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Clean Water Act (CWA).

The ESA protects bull trout and steelhead. The National Marine Fisheries Service and the US Department of Fish and Wildlife are the federal agencies responsible for designating endangered species and ensuring recovery. These agencies may take broad steps to protect the fish, regulating any activity that affects water quality—including irrigation.

Under the CWA, the Department of Ecology (DOE) has established Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goals for all water bodies not meeting water quality standards. The DOE requires that all points of discharge to the **Yakima River comply with a turbidity target of 25 NTU.**

## Policy Details

- During irrigation season, RSBOJC will monitor irrigated property runoff that enters project waterways.
- The discharger will receive written notice of the water quality sample result.
- Any collected sample over **300 NTU** violates the turbidity target and will require corrective action.
- The discharger will be notified of the noncompliance in writing and will be **required to agree to a Short- and Long-Term Plan.**
- The Short Term Plan must be implemented within 10 days of the notice.
- If the Short-Term Plan is not submitted, or if after submission, samples are above 150 NTU, the district will reduce the discharger's water delivery at all delivery points within the violation parcel to a rate of 0.37 cfs (166 gpm) per 40 acres.
- Continued noncompliance will result in further **reduction to 0.25 cfs (112 gpm) per 40 acres** until compliance is met or until the end of the irrigation season.
- If there is no compliance at the end of the irrigation season, a Long-Term Plan is required before water will be turned on. Sampling will continue.

- With continued non-compliance, the district will reduce the discharger's delivery at all points of the contiguous farm area until compliance.
- A Landowner with violations 3 years in a row on the same parcel will have water delivery remain at 0.25 cfs per 40 acres until the end of the irrigation season.

## Results

The RSBOJC Water Quality Program was implemented in 1997. In 2022 all four agricultural return flows met the State of Washington Water Quality Standard of 25 NTU 90 percent of the time.

Turbidity Values for 1997 vs. 2022 Irrigation Season

