



# Rulemaking to Update Ambient Air Quality Standards and Significant Impact Levels

Chapters 173-476 and 173-400 WAC  
April 15, 2026 public meeting

# Rulemaking Team

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# Agenda



Rulemaking overview and  
timeline



Draft rule changes



Q and A



Wrap up and next steps

# Rulemaking Overview

Updating two air quality rules:

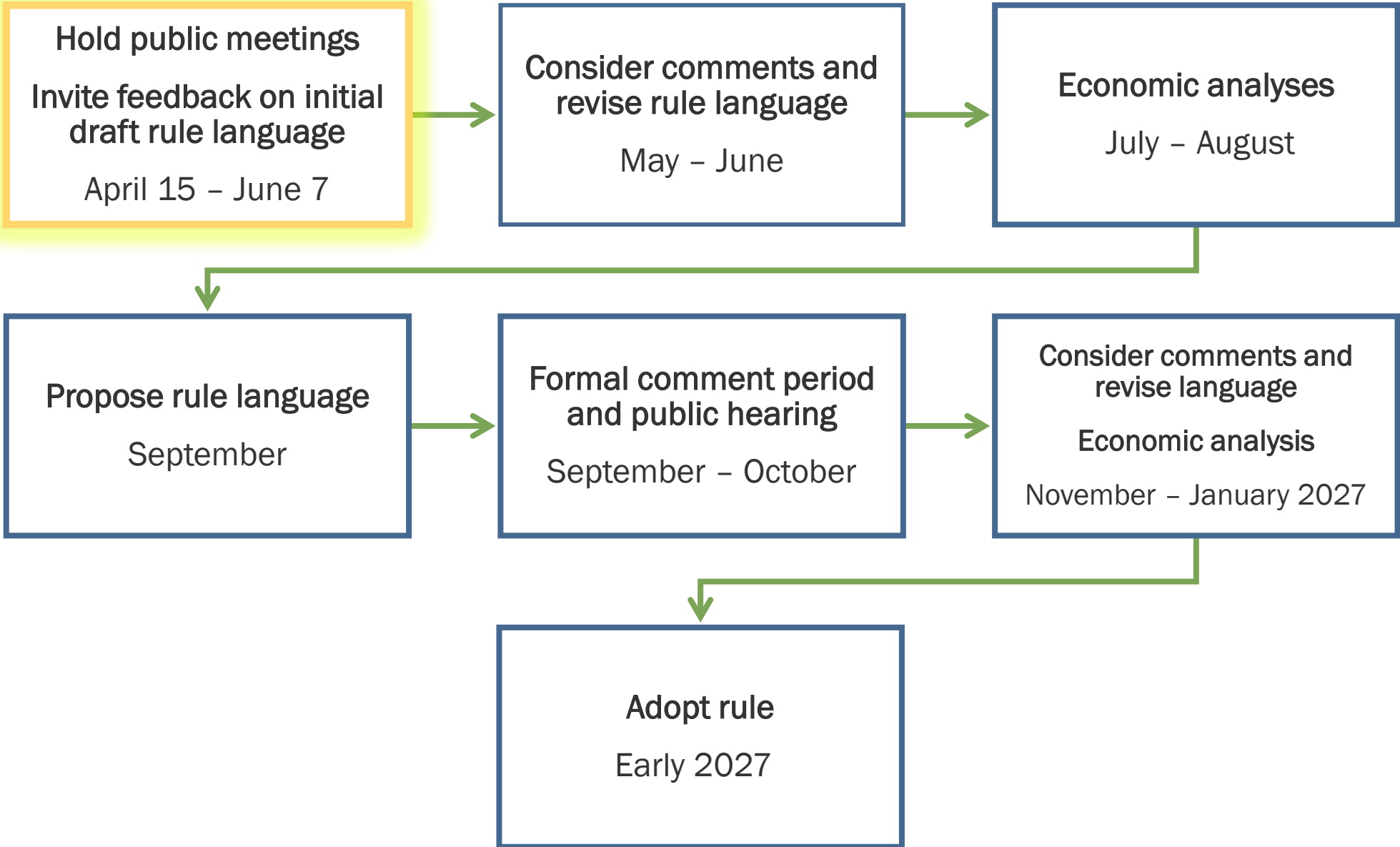
## Chapter 173-476 WAC, Ambient Air Quality Standards

- Update standards for fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) to align with revisions to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) adopted by EPA in 2024

## Chapter 173-400 WAC, General Regulations for Air Pollution Sources

- Update “cause or contribute threshold values,” also called “significant impact levels” (SILs), to align with current EPA-recommended SIL values
- Update SIL provisions to add permitting authority discretion in the new source review process

# Rulemaking Timeline





# Ambient Air Quality Standards

## Chapter 173-476 WAC



# Criteria Air Pollutants



## Particle Pollution

Tiny solids or liquid drops floating in the air.

**Sources:**

- Wood stoves and fireplaces
- Outdoor burning
- Dust from construction and agriculture
- Wildfires



## Ground-level Ozone

Contributes to smog. Forms when some air pollutants react with each other in sunlight and hot weather.

**Sources:**

- Cars
- Industry



## Carbon Monoxide

Odorless, tasteless, colorless gas from combustion.

**Sources:**

- Cars
- Wood stoves and fireplaces
- Outdoor burning
- Industrial combustion

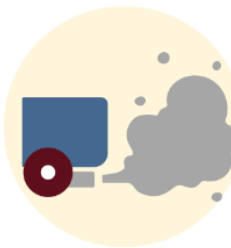


## Sulfur Dioxide

Forms when fuel that contains sulfur is burned.

**Sources:**

- Industrial facilities (like fossil fuel power plants, pulp mills)
- Ships and locomotives



## Nitrogen Dioxide

Produced when fuel burns. Highest levels are near roads.

**Sources:**

- Cars
- Ships and locomotives
- Industrial power plants



## Lead

Lead was an air quality problem. Today, all of Washington meets the air quality standard for lead.

**Source:**

- Metal and ore processing facilities

More information: <https://www.ecology.wa.gov/airstandards#criteria>

# Revisions to Two Standards

## Fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)

- Old annual standard: 12 ug/m<sup>3</sup> (primary)
- 2024 revised annual standard: 9 ug/m<sup>3</sup> (primary)

## Sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)

- 2024 added new annual standard: 10 ppb (secondary)
- Remove two outdated standards that no longer apply in Washington
  - Annual: 20 ppb (secondary)
  - 24-hour: 140 ppb (secondary)

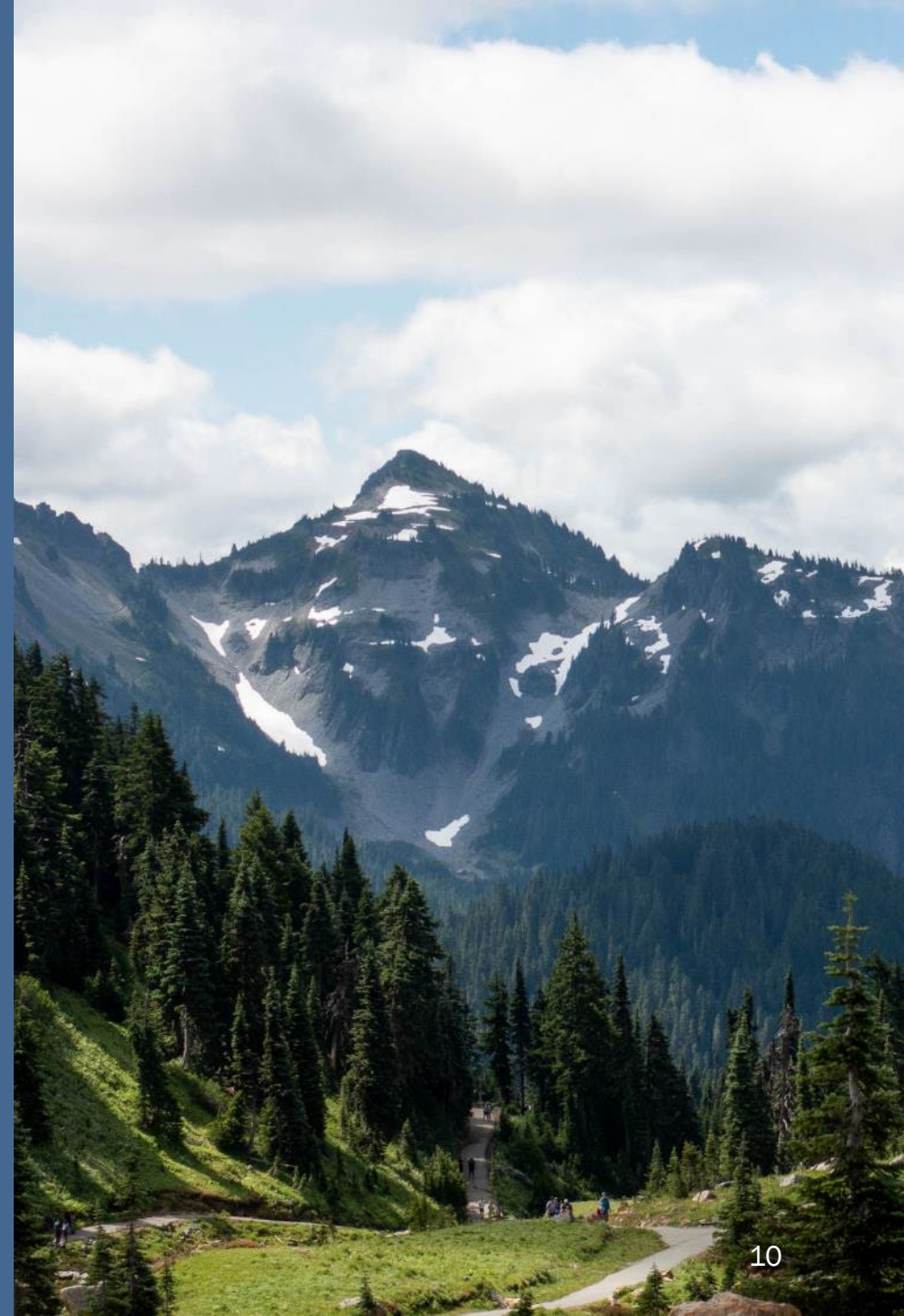


# Questions or Comments?





# General Regulations for Air Pollution Sources Chapter 173-400 WAC



# Cause or Contribute Threshold Values aka Significant Impact Levels (SILs)



- Used by permitting authorities to help determine if emissions from a proposed new source or source modification would “cause or contribute” to a violation of an ambient air quality standard.
- Function as a trigger to require a cumulative impact analysis to demonstrate that the impact of a proposed project would not cause or contribute to a violation.
  - A cumulative impact analysis includes background concentrations and impacts from nearby sources, in addition to modeled data, for the proposed new source.
- Used in the federal Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) program, which applies to “major sources.”
  - Washington adopted EPA-recommended SIL values into the general New Source Review (NSR) rules, which includes “major” and “minor” sources.
  - Updates are needed to match current EPA-recommended values and rewrite language so permitting authorities can still use their judgment when reviewing projects.

# Washington SILs Compared to Current EPA-Recommended Values



| Pollutant         | Averaging Period | WA SILs ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) unless indicated, from WAC 173-400-113 | EPA SILs ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) unless indicated, from 40 CFR 51.165(b) |
|-------------------|------------------|---|---|
| CO                | 1-hour           | 2 mg/m <sup>3</sup>   | 2 mg/m <sup>3</sup>   |
|                   | 8-hour           | 0.5 mg/m <sup>3</sup>   | 0.5 mg/m <sup>3</sup>   |
| SO <sub>2</sub>   | 1-hour           | 30  | 7.86 <sup>1</sup>   |
|                   | 3-hour           | 25  | 25  |
|                   | 24-hour          | 5   | 5   |
|                   | Annual           | 1.0   | 1.0   |
| PM <sub>10</sub>  | 24-hour          | 5   | 5   |
|                   | Annual           | 1.0   | 1.0   |
| PM <sub>2.5</sub> | 24-hour          | 1.2   | 1.2   |
|                   | Annual           | 0.3   | 0.13 <sup>2</sup>   |
| NO <sub>2</sub>   | 1-hour           | -   | 7.5 <sup>3</sup>  |
|                   | Annual           | 1.0   | 1.0   |
| Ozone             | 8-hour           | -   | 1.0 ppm <sup>4</sup>  |

<sup>1</sup> Interim SO<sub>2</sub> SIL guidance – 2010  
<sup>2</sup> PM<sub>2.5</sub> Annual SIL guidance – 2024  
<sup>3</sup> Interim NO<sub>2</sub> SIL guidance – 2010  
<sup>4</sup> Ozone SIL guidance – 2018

# WAC 173-400-113(3) – Revised Language

~~(3) Allowable emissions from the proposed new source or allowable emissions increase from the proposed modification will not cause or contribute to a violation of any ambient air quality standard. If the modeled concentrations of allowable emissions from the proposed new source or the increase in emissions from the proposed modification are below the levels in Table 4a, the proposed source **does not contribute** to a violation an ambient air quality standard.~~

**\*\*The proposed new source or modification may be considered not to cause or contribute to a violation of an ambient air quality standard if the modeled concentrations of allowable emissions or the allowable emissions increase are below the values in Table 4a. A permitting authority may require a cumulative impact analysis even if modeled values are below the values in Table 4a if there is information that indicates the impact of the proposed new source or modification could result in a violation of an ambient air quality standard when added to the impact of nearby sources or existing background concentrations.**

**\*\*Updated language**

# WAC 173-400-113(4) – Revised Language

~~(4) If the projected impact of the allowable emissions from the proposed new major stationary source (as defined in WAC 173-400-810) or the projected impact of the increase in allowable emissions from the proposed major modification (as defined in WAC 173-400-810) at any location within a nonattainment area **does not exceed** the following levels for the pollutants for which the area has been designated nonattainment, then the proposed new source or modification **will not be considered to cause or contribute** to a violation of an ambient air quality standard:~~

**\*\*If the projected impact of allowable emissions from the proposed new major stationary source (as defined in WAC 173-400-810) or allowable emissions increase from the proposed major modification (as defined in WAC 173-400-810) at any location within a nonattainment area **are below** the values in Table 4a for the pollutants which the area has been designated nonattainment, the proposed new major source of major modification **may be considered not to cause or contribute** to a violation of an ambient air quality standard. A permitting authority may require a cumulative impact analysis even if modeled values are below the values in Table 4a if there is information that indicates the impact of the proposed new major source or modification could result in a violation of an ambient air quality standard when added to the impact of nearby sources or existing background concentrations.**

**\*\*Updated language**

# Questions or Comments?



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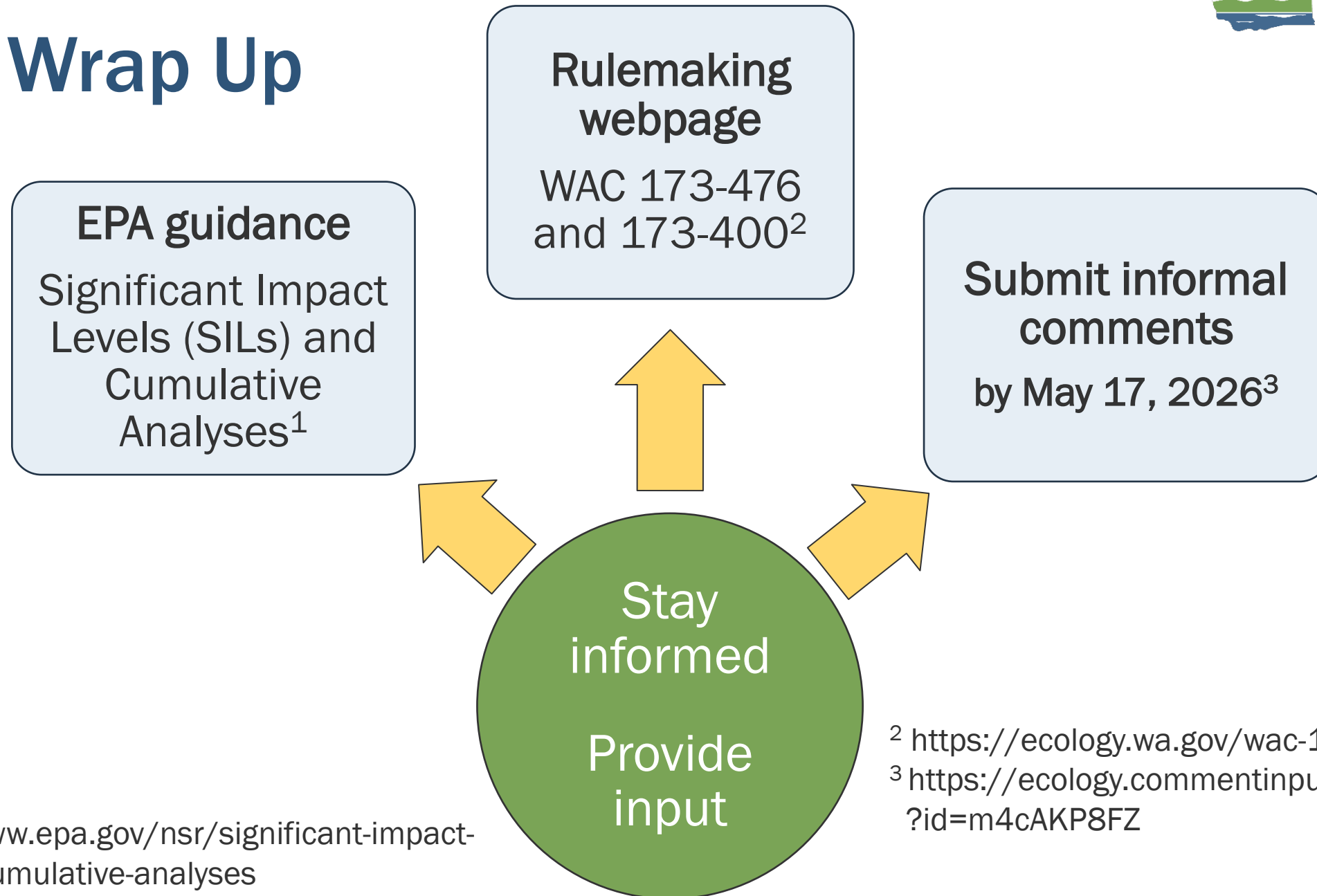
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# Ecology Contacts

# Wrap Up



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/nsr/significant-impact-levels-sils-cumulative-analyses>

<sup>2</sup> <https://ecology.wa.gov/wac-173-476-400>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ecology.commentinput.com/?id=m4cAKP8FZ>



# Thank you