Stormwater Program Manager

Job Description

A stormwater program manager's primary responsibility is to ensure that the entity they work for is maintaining compliance with their stormwater permit. This occupation involves developing and managing compliance programs, as well as educating the public, with an aim to ensure that environmentally-conscious water systems are prioritized.

Salary

Entry – $46,000

Middle – $75,982

Top – $99,000+

Core Tasks

- Coordinate with others to ensure stormwater activities are performed and documented
- Conduct public education and outreach regarding compliance with stormwater permits
- Maintain readiness for inspection and audits and respond to emergency situations such as flooding
- Work with other municipalities and regulatory agencies on stormwater issues
- Prepare annual compliance report in support of stormwater permits

Workplace / Environment

- Work hours
  Approx. 40 hours/week
- Environment
  Field Work performing tasks like sample collection

  Frequent Communication with stakeholders, community residents, and youth

  Frequent Communication with city workers in the office
- Travel
  Travel is important to meet with **stakeholders**, **collect samples**, and respond to **floods**

Education / Prerequisites

Education Level

Bachelor's degree in environmental science, environmental education, biology, ecology, civil/environmental engineering or related field

Licensing

Usually specific to the position. Some include FWPCOA "A" Certificate and DEP Stormwater, Erosion and Sedimentation Control Certificate

Pre-Job Preparation

Knowledge of current, local stormwater issues is crucial in any stormwater job

Sustainability Ambassadors
Clean Water Internship
LWWIP - Water Program

Experience

Soft skills

- Communication
- Organization
- Project Management

Technical skills

- Microsoft Office
- GIS and budget/ work order systems
- Documentation Skills

Career Path: Diane Hennebert

About Me

Stormwater Program Manager ~ Anacortes

Bachelors of Science in Environmental Science
Minor in Chemistry at Humboldt State University

High School Life

“In high school, I played three sports and was in ASB. I took honors classes and worked a part time job and was really **involved in everything**. I left for my freshman year of college and I thought I had all of these ideas about what I wanted to do. I was going to go into engineering and liked **math** and **science**. But, I got to college and realized that I had no real life experience. I still loved math and science, but engineering wasn't quite the right path.”

“I wound up taking a couple years off and did two years of **AmeriCorps**. I worked in the Highline School District with youth in the middle school, high school, and elementary school. AmeriCorps was amazing—I can’t say enough good things about it. It's a program for people between the ages of 18 and 25. It's a one year or 9-month commitment. You typically get either a stipend or minimum wage and health benefits, as well as some great training along the way. At the end of the year, you get a scholarship that can be used to pay off existing loans or pay for tuition at a university or trade school. AmeriCorps was the start of me really getting **excited about collaborating** with different kinds of people.”

“After the first year, I entered the **Washington Conservation Corps**, which was focused on environmental restoration. That was what set me on my path—spending years doing **environmental restoration** and realizing that I could get paid to do it. I learned a lot about environmental issues in Western Washington and decided that I wanted to go back to school to study environmental science.”

College Choices

“**Humboldt State University** was the best fit for me. Their **environmental science** program was really hands-on. In our botany class, part of our labs was just walking out into the redwoods on the coast in Northern California. For oceanography class, I took a cruise on the ocean and did real-time sampling. It was a really great experience and, because it was a small school, we had **small class sizes**. My **professors** knew who I was and what I was interested in and could point me towards resources that I would find interesting.”

“When I began studying environmental science in college, I really only saw things through the environmental protection lens. There were a lot of decisions being made and I just couldn't understand why they were being made that way. Then, one class that was a requirement that I was not excited to take was **environmental economics**. It ended up being the best class I took in college. The class was half business majors and half environmental science majors. The professor was amazing, and was able to frame all of these economic ideas and decisions in an environmental setting. It really helped me understand why some decisions were made the way that they were made. I think that's really helped me moving forward—realizing that to be successful, we have to find a solution that will work for everyone. Not everyone looks at it through the same lens I do.”

“Finishing up my education, I got a **Bachelors of Science and Environmental Science** and a Minor in **Chemistry**. My area of emphasis in environmental science was **water quality and hazardous waste**. My plan was to work on environmental cleanups at that point.”

Into the Real World

“My first job out of college was doing stormwater treatment on construction sites. I’ve been in stormwater ever since. Now, I'm the **stormwater program manager** for the city of Anacortes. My primary job function is compliance with our NPDES Permit (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System). Under that permit, we have requirements regarding comprehensive stormwater planning, education and outreach, public involvement and participation, mapping and documentation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, controlling runoff, municipal operations and maintenance, and source control for existing businesses.”

“It's a very wide **variety of programs** that all fall under one permit, and it's my job to ensure the city's compliance under each of those. I'm a department of one because we're a small city, so I have a really wide variety in my job. One day I might be sending out letters to a business park to bring their pond up to standards, then I might go out and do some fieldwork, and then present to some students about stormwater. It's a really wide variety and I really enjoy it.”

About My Job

“Protecting water quality is huge—there's a value to this.”

Pros

- “I feel like **my work has a lot of value**. Life is too short and we spend way too much time at work for you to do work that you don't feel passionate about. Protecting water quality is huge, and I live on an island. It's a big deal. I go by these waterways every day.”
- “A pro is getting to work with a wide variety of people across the community. I get to **collaborate** with all different kinds of people. I enjoy meeting people and finding goals that we can work towards.”
- “I get to see a lot of **beautiful places**. The other morning I was sampling out at one of our local beaches at around 7:30 in the morning. I was the only one on the beach, the water was glassy, and there was a Heron, just like 50 yards down.”

Cons

- “One of the trickier parts of the job is finding a **balance** between government regulations, business interests, community interest, and environmental protection. You need to find the best path forward. It can be hard when you have people who just don’t like the government in general or don’t believe in environmental protections. I feel fortunate though because I live in an area where people live here because they love this environment—they love the Salish Sea and the waterways. It makes it easier for me to do my job.”

Office Work

- “I have an office I go to at City Hall every day. My job is so **collaborative** both inside and outside of city hall. I work with pretty much every department in the city office. I work with planning on code and development, Public Works, the legal department, and the police and fire departments on spill cleanup. We’re used to quick and easy interactions in the office. I have many **meetings** with different people, including outside organizations.”
- “I enjoy the **variety** in my day-to-day work. I get to work on a wide variety of projects and never know what might be coming my way—I might get a phone call with a question or idea.”

Fieldwork

- “I do hands-on **education** and **outreach**.”
- “I **sample** and measure pH, temperature, and turbidity. I also take samples to our wastewater treatment plant lab.”
- “You never know, when in the middle of your job, you might get a **spill call**. Then I’d drop everything I'm doing and head out and do some sampling, contact the Department of Ecology, and coordinate cleanup.”
- “I have been building a citizen science outfall monitoring program with Friends of Skagit Beaches where we train **volunteers** to monitor stormwater outfalls.”

Skills

- "A really important part is building good **communication** and **relationships** within the community and the businesses. When I talk with a homeowner or business, I try and really explain why it is we have these regulations and where they come from. I need to work with them to find the best possible solution."
- "**Interpersonal skills** are really important—working with a wide variety of people and temperaments."
- "Being able to **multitask** and switch from one project to another is important because you might have a wide variety of directions and types of projects."

Education/Experience

- "This job typically requires a **bachelor's degree**—almost everyone I know who has my position also has a bachelor's."
- "Take any opportunities to do any kind of **environmental restoration**. There's usually a lot of opportunities for stream restoration and cleanups. Those are good opportunities to get out and see what it looks like out there and how doing these things can have an impact."
- "The more you can get involved in **environmental issues** in your area, the better prepared you'll be for the job and more knowledgeable you'll be about the issues that come up."
- "To get experience, try anything and everything you can do in the **Natural Resources Department**. These could be jobs, sampling, working on clean water issues, green infrastructure, and learning about low impact development—anything where you can start experiencing how these programs work, how government works, and what that process looks like."

The Future of **Stormwater Program Management**

"There's a lot of momentum to protect water quality"

"I think that water quality regulations will continue to tighten, and with that this job will remain important. There's this old saying—'the solution to pollution is dilution'—but that that doesn't actually work."

"There's going to need to be a lot of **innovation** with new ways of doing things. There's a lot of momentum to protect water quality and move forward in a cleaner way. In order to actually make it work though, we need a complete overhaul. I think in the future there'll be a lot more low impact development, where it can be financially lucrative for businesses to run in a more environmentally friendly manner."