RCW 90.44.400  Groundwater management areas—Purpose—Standards—
Identification—Designation. (1) This legislation is enacted for the
purpose of identifying groundwater management procedures that are
consistent with both local needs and state water resource policies and
management objectives; including the protection of water quality,
assurance of quantity, and efficient management of water resources to
meet future needs.

In recognition of existing water rights and the need to manage
groundwater aquifers for future use, the department of ecology shall,
by rule, establish standards, criteria, and a process for the
designation of specific groundwater areas or sub-areas, or separate
depth zones within such area or sub-area, and provide for either the
department of ecology, local governments, or groundwater users of the
area to initiate development of a groundwater management program for
each area or sub-area, consistent with state and local government
objectives, policies, and authorities. The department shall develop
and adopt these rules by January 1, 1986.

(2) The department of ecology, in cooperation with other state
agencies, local government, and user groups, shall identify probable
groundwater management areas or sub-areas. The department shall also
prepare a general schedule for the development of groundwater
management programs that recognizes the available local or state
agency staff and financial resources to carry out the intent of RCW
90.44.400 through 90.44.420. The department shall also provide the
option for locally initiated studies and for local government to
assume the lead agency role in developing the groundwater management
program and in implementing the provisions of RCW 90.44.400 through
90.44.420. The criteria to guide identification of the groundwater
areas or sub-areas shall include but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Aquifer systems that are declining due to restricted recharge
or over-utilization;
(b) Aquifer systems in which overappropriation may have occurred
and adjudication of water rights has not yet been completed;
(c) Aquifer systems currently being considered for water supply
reservation under chapter 90.54 RCW for future beneficial uses;
(d) Aquifers identified as the primary source of supply for
public water supply systems;
(e) Aquifers designated as a sole source aquifer by the federal
environmental protection agency; and
(f) Geographical areas where land use may result in contamination
or degradation of the groundwater quality.

(3) In developing the groundwater management programs, priority
shall be given to areas or sub-areas where water quality is imminently
threatened. [1985 c 453 § 1.]