

Eliminating Dirty Discharges

Cooperative Stormwater Management

Introduction

A river runs through it - Colfax Washington that is. The north and south forks of the Palouse River converge on this farming community, bringing with them all the benefits of nature's incredible bounty.



Empire Disposal's direct discharge to river

Industrial stormwater isn't something that generates a lot of interest and hardly grasps most people's attention as they go about their busy lives.

However, the Washington Clean Water Act (RCW 90.48.080) states that "discharging of polluting matter in waters is prohibited." Ecology's Water Quality Program is charged with enforcing the laws within this act. The intent is to bring about positive change with a minimum of enforcement.

The primary goal of the stormwater permit is to reduce or eliminate pollution discharged to water ways through a stormwater system. Proper best management practices (BMPs) and modern techniques should accomplish this goal. The inspections conducted by Ecology staff are intended to help protect the environmental health of the city of Colfax and the Palouse River.

There are two facilities involved in this story: Empire Disposal Hauling and M&M Harrison Electric.

A Tale of Two Site Visits

The city of Colfax has a stormwater system with several locations that discharge directly to the Palouse River. In an effort to educate the industrial community about beneficial stormwater practices, Ecology added staff to conduct site inspections.

On February 23, 2007, Michael Hepp and Ted Hamlin visited a new fueling facility in Colfax. As they discussed the potential for direct discharge to the river from the fueling islands, they saw a nearby garbage hauling business. Garbage hauling companies that discharge to surface water require an industrial stormwater permit.

After completing the site visit at the fueling facility, the Ecology staff investigated the garbage hauling business. A visual inspection of the property identified a stormwater manhole cover down grade from the garbage truck washout area.

Observation leads to assistance

Empire Disposal Hauling is located in a complex of buildings formerly owned and operated by the county. These buildings were sold off to private businesses some time ago. Michael and Ted identified themselves and asked to speak with the manager. We had a positive, cooperative discussion about the issues observed and ways to correct the problems. The manager was made aware that the operation required an Industrial Stormwater General Permit which includes a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan. He was very cooperative and accepted the observations made. He agreed to remedy the situation by installing an approved vehicle washing facility and



applying for the permit. All of the necessary forms and fact sheets were provided to him. After visiting the hauling business, Michael and Ted decided to take a look at the other businesses occupying the former county buildings to see if there were any other potential discharges to the stormwater system.

M&M Harrison Electric is just up the street and occupies several of these buildings. Outside of one building, we observed a vehicle wash rack. After talking to the manager, we learned that this building was subleased to a trucking company for pressure-washing eighteen wheelers. The water from this process flows to a sump that discharges to the Colfax stormwater system.

When this discharge was brought to the manager's attention, he immediately decided to either discontinue using the rack or incorporate appropriate BMPs to solve the problem. Both of these facilities engaged consultants or contractors to assist them in designing BMPs to address their discharges.

Outcomes

Spotting these facilities was the result of a compliance inspection and observing what else is going on.

Both facilities have discontinued their past practices and are improving their wastewater management. This in turn will improve the water quality of any stormwater runoff that reaches the Palouse River.

Ecology will ensure the discharges are directed to oil/water separators and tied into city wastewater system for further treatment. When this is accomplished, the result will be a reduction in pollutants from these sites. Garbage truck box washout water or the steam cleaned oils, hydraulic fluids, and paint chips from the wash rack will no longer go to the river.



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