

Water Resources Management Program for the Spokane River and Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, Chapter 173-557 WAC, and amendment to WAC 173-555-010

Effective February 27, 2015, there is a new water resources management rule for the Spokane River and Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie (SVRP) Aquifer. The rule applies to new uses of surface and groundwater within the boundary of the SVRP Aquifer in Washington State. Ecology has also amended the General provision (section 010) of Chapter 173-555 WAC "Water Resources Program in the Little Spokane River Basin, WRIA 55."

The SVRP Aquifer supplies abundant groundwater for our population. This groundwater also supplies water to the Spokane River which runs nearly dry in some areas in summer.

Low summer flows are part of the natural cycle. Climate change is expected to lower our snow pack, further reducing our water supply. With a rapidly growing population and the close connection between the aquifer and the river, it is clear that demands on water and pressure on river flows will only increase. Careful water management is needed if there is to be enough water for all the demands on it, now and into the future.

What is Chapter 173-557 WAC?

This rule establishes Ecology's policies to guide the protection, use, and management of Spokane River basin surface water and the SVRP Aquifer within the boundary of the rule area.

The purpose of Chapter 173-557 WAC is to:

- Establish instream flows to protect instream resources within the Spokane River.
- Protect existing water rights from new water uses.
- Establish and protect Washington state interests in the water resources of the Spokane River.
- Meet statutory obligations to manage waters for public use.

Why did Ecology amend WAC 173-555-010 (Little Spokane rule, section 010)?

The affected areas of the existing Little Spokane rule and the new Spokane rule overlap. The purpose of the amendment is to clarify the application of each rule in this shared area.

WHY IT MATTERS

The Department of Ecology has a legal obligation to both protect reliable supplies of drinking water and to protect fish, wildlife, and other "instream resources" that depend on adequate amounts of water in streams. Careful water management is needed to help ensure there is enough water for all uses, now and into the future. This rule will affect how water is managed from the effective date forward, for the benefit of people and the environment.

Rule adoption date:
January 27, 2015

Rule takes effect:
February 27, 2015

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Special accommodations:

If you need this document in a format for the visually impaired, call the Water Resources Program at 360-407-6872.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

Response to Comments

Ecology's response to comments received during the public comment period is now available. Download a copy at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rules/557-docs.html>

Whom does this rule affect?

All new water rights established after the effective date of the rule, February 27, 2015, must comply with this rule. The rule will affect:

- Municipal water purveyors
- Land owners and developers
- Local and state agencies
- Public and interested parties.

Appeal procedures

This adoption can be appealed under procedures described in the Administrative Procedure Act (RCW 34.05.330). For more information about appealing this rule adoption, please contact Bari Schreiner, Agency Rules Coordinator, at (360) 407-6998 or bari.schreiner@ecy.wa.gov.

More information

For more information on the Spokane rule, please visit Ecology's web site at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/rules/557-ov.html>

To get updates on Ecology's rulemaking activities, sign-up for the WACTrack e-mail list at www.ecy.wa.gov/maillist.html (under "Rulemaking").