



Spokane River

Focus on NPDES Permit Reissuance

Photography by Adriane Bongias © 2014

Updating Water Quality Permits

Ecology is updating water quality permits for the five facilities that discharge wastewater to the Spokane River.

The draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits reflect important updates to ensure dischargers meet state water quality standards.

The five wastewater facilities currently operating with administratively extended permits (issued in 2011) are:

- City of Spokane (municipal)
- Spokane County (municipal)
- Liberty Lake Sewer and Water District (municipal)
- Kaiser Aluminum (industrial)
- Inland Empire Paper (industrial)

We are proposing to include numeric limits for polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), as well as best management practices (BMPs) for reducing PCBs in a comprehensive, practical way.

Why are we updating the permits now?

We need permits that accurately reflect the facilities that are in operation to ensure compliance with all state standards.

We want to start the process of updating the permits because of the complexity of each permit; we plan to issue the draft permits individually or in groups of two. Staggering the release of the draft permits for comment will provide time for meaningful public review and discussion with tribes and stakeholders on each permit.

Public Comment Periods

[We want your input](#), you may submit comments on [our website](#) (*preferred method*) or by mail.

Public Workshops and Hearings

We are planning two identical workshops to explain the proposed changes to the permits and to answer questions prior to the formal public hearings. The hearings provide an opportunity for people to give formal oral testimony. Oral testimony will receive the same consideration as written comments. The public hearings will begin immediately following each workshop and will conclude when testimony is complete. The workshops and hearings offered via webinar allow individuals to view the presentation and provide testimony via computer, phone, or mobile device. Ecology will not be offering in-person hearings due to safety concerns from COVID-19.

Comment on the **Inland Empire Paper Company** draft permit from **March 4 – April 18, 2022**.

Meetings:

Tuesday, April 5 at 1:30 p.m.

[Join the webinar workshop/hearing](#)

Thursday, April 7 at 6 p.m.

[Join the webinar workshop/hearing](#)

Comment on the **Spokane County and Liberty Lake Sewer & Water District** draft permits from **March 18 – May 3, 2022**.

Meetings:

Tuesday, April 19 at 2 p.m.

[Join the webinar workshop/hearing](#)

Tuesday, April 26 at 6 p.m.

[Join the webinar workshop/hearing](#)

Next Steps

After reviewing the feedback we receive, we will make decisions on permit reissuance for each facility. We plan to complete this work by spring, 2022.

To stay informed on public comment periods and hearings, sign up for our [Spokane River email list](#).

Improving the Spokane River

These permits are only one of the tools we are using to improve the Spokane River water so people can continue to fish and recreate. We continue to work with partners to improve oxygen levels and reduce toxic chemicals, such as PCBs.

The [Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force](#) (SRRTTF) leads efforts to identify and reduce sources of PCBs to the Spokane River. After several years of studies that measured the extent of PCB pollution, the SRRTTF developed a comprehensive plan containing more than 25 projects and BMPs that, when implemented, will prevent PCBs from reaching the river.

In addition, we completed the Spokane River and Lake Spokane Dissolved Oxygen Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in 2010. This TMDL outlines strict limitations on phosphorus and other nutrients that decrease the availability of oxygen for aquatic life.

What has been accomplished?

- Wastewater treatment systems have been upgraded to meet the strict phosphorus limits. These upgrades are also proving to be extremely effective at removing PCBs.
- Local Conservation Districts and environmental groups working directly with landowners to reduce runoff from forestry and agricultural practices.
- The City of Spokane adopted an [Integrated Clean Water Plan](#) that helps prioritize projects for managing stormwater and wastewater.

Cleanup Projects

We work in partnership to clean up several sites in the Spokane River basin where former business practices have left toxic contamination. For a full list of PCB and metals cleanup sites along the Spokane River, [visit our webpage](#).

Related Information

- [Spokane River Dissolved Oxygen TMDL](#)
- [Learn more about PCBs](#)

Translations

Español (Spanish)

El Departamento de Ecología (Ecology) está actualizando las autorizaciones de calidad del agua para los cinco establecimientos de Washington que vierten aguas residuales al río Spokane. Estos borradores de autorizaciones reflejan importantes actualizaciones a fin de garantizar que los establecimientos cumplan con los estándares de calidad del agua del estado. Para solicitar información en español, comuníquese con Karl Rains llamando al 509-329-3601 o enviando un correo electrónico a karl.rains@ecy.wa.gov.

русский (Russian)

Экологическая служба повторно оформляет разрешения, касающиеся качества воды, для пяти учреждений в штате Washington, сбрасывающих воду в реку Spokane. Эти черновые варианты разрешений содержат важные дополнения, гарантирующие, что учреждения будут соблюдать стандарты качества воды, принятые в штате. Чтобы запросить информацию на испанском, русском или маршалльском языке, обратитесь к Karl Rains по номеру 509-329-3601 или электронной почте karl.rains@ecy.wa.gov.

Majol jouj im kebaak (Marshallese)

Jikin eo ej katak kin menninmour im mejatoto ej kökkāäl kōmelim ko ikijen joñan erreō in dān ilo jikin ko lalem ilo Washington rej katoor dān ettoonon ñan Spokane Rej. Kōmelim in kōmadmōd kein rej kwalok melele aurōk ko emōj kökkāäl ñan lolorjak ke jikin kein rej tōbare joñan erreō in dān ko an state. Ñan kajitōk melele ilo Kajin Majol jouj im kebaak Karl Rains ilo 509-329-3601 ñe ejab email ilo karl.rains@ecy.wa.gov.



Karl Rains

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To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 509-329-3601 or email at karl.rains@ecy.wa.gov, or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.