



Hearing Notice

Proposed Certified Alternatives to Grass Seed Field Burning

Tuesday, May 5, 1998

**First hearing at 2:00 p.m. Second hearing at 6:00 p.m.
Spokane Ag Trade Center & Conference Theater**

Background

Field and turf grasses are grown for seed throughout various areas of Washington State. Due to the fact that most grasses produced in Washington are perennial crops, grass fields do not typically receive annual tillage treatment. Instead, grass fields remain in for several consecutive years. In order to improve yields, growers usually remove residue following harvest. Traditionally, this has been accomplished by burning the residue on the field. This type of open field burning produces particulate matter (PM) air pollution. In addition, open field burning produces carbon monoxide (CO) and Volatile Organic Hydrocarbons (VOC).

Recent Developments

During the summer of 1995, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) announced that it was beginning the process of implementing that portion of the Clean Air Act governing the process of certifying alternatives to grass burning [RCW 70.94.656(3)]. Ecology began gathering information related to potential grass seed field burning alternatives. In March of 1996, Ecology determined that emissions from grass seed fields were not effectively controlled and announced efforts to reduce emissions from this source. The plan consisted of two phases. 1) Establish acreage limits for burning through pro-rata reductions beginning in 1996. 2) Proceed to consider the "certification" of an alternative to the practice of open field burning for grass seed production. Ecology is proposing an alternative as part of this second phase

Proposed Rule Amendments

Ecology is proposing an amendment to the agricultural burning rule (WAC 173-430). This amendment would certify mechanical residue management as an alternative to the open field burning of grass seed fields where such an alternative is available. The proposed rule language includes an exemption for steep slopes and mitigation for small farms.

What is mechanical residue management?

Mechanical residue management means removing the residue from fields using non-thermal techniques such as tilling, swathing, chopping, baling, flailing, mowing, and raking. A grower may decide to use any other similar non-thermal, mechanical technique and any combination of techniques he/she chooses.

When may burning be allowed?

Ecology proposes that mechanical residue management is reasonably available throughout the state wherever baling can be used. In order to burn, a grower must certify in writing that baling is not reasonable due to extreme field conditions related to steep slopes. At no time may the acreage burned under a waiver be more than 1/3 the acreage in production as of May 1, 1996. The process for requesting a waiver and the conditions that must be met are contained in the proposed rule language.

What is mitigation and to whom may it apply?

As part of the process to propose a rule amendment, Ecology must evaluate the potential economic impact to small businesses. Small farms may be disproportionately affected by the proposed rule. In order to mitigate this potential impact, during the 1998 season only, a small farm owner whose gross 1997 revenues from all farm operations were less than \$300,000 may burn up to 25% of the acreage burned in 1997.

The Public Hearings

When: Tuesday, May 5, 1998. First hearing at 2:00 p.m. Second hearing at 6:00 p.m.
Where: Spokane Center Conference Theater & Ag Trade Center
334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, Washington

Review Copies Available

Internet, Dept. of Ecology Air Quality Homepage, <http://www.wa.gov/ecology/air.airhome.html>
Department of Ecology, Eastern Regional Office, N. 4601 Monroe, Spokane
Department of Ecology, Headquarters Air Quality Program, 300 Desmond Drive, Lacey
Benton County Clean Air Authority, 650 George Washington Way, Richland
Northwest Air Pollution Authority, 1600 S. Second St., Mount Vernon
Neill Public Library, 210 N. Grand Ave., Pullman
For a copy of the draft regulation call Tami Dahlgren (360) 407-6830 or Brenda Cavan (509) 456-6378

Comment by Mail

The deadline for comments is May 8, 1998. If you are unable to attend one of the hearings listed above but still would like to offer formal testimony, please send your written comments to *Melissa McEachron, Department of Ecology, Air Quality Program, PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600.*

Commonly Asked Questions

How can I testify?

In person at the hearings or by mail or both.

What will happen at the hearings?

The purpose of the hearings is to receive testimony on the proposed rule amendment. Each hearing will begin with a brief explanation of the rule. The public may then present their views on the proposed rule amendment for the official record.

How will the Department of Ecology address my concerns?

Ecology is required to respond in writing to testimony directly related to the proposal. The department uses a Concise Explanatory Statement to accomplish this. Ecology will consider testimony when making a final decision.

For More Information

Melissa McEachron, Air Quality Program Headquarters, Lacey (360) 407-6860
Chad Atkins, Air Quality Program, Eastern Regional Office, Spokane (509) 456-6114

If you have special accommodation needs, please contact Karen Wood at (509) 456-5010 (voice) or (509) 458-2055 (TDD).