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STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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March 7, 2005

The Honorable Bob Morton  
State Senator  
PO Box 40407  
Olympia, WA 98504-0407

Dear Senator Morton:

Thank you for your letter received on December 17, 2004, regarding the water quality assessment for phosphorus in Moses Lake. While we are still reviewing the comments we received on the overall statewide Assessment and will be providing a general response to comments, I wanted to directly respond to some of your concerns regarding what you consider the department's lack of response to concerns about Moses Lake data.

As I mentioned earlier in my letter sent October 29, 2004, the department received 10 comment letters on the Moses Lakes listings as a result of the public review last spring. These letters varied in their support of Category 2 or Category 5. No new phosphorus data or analysis was submitted for Moses Lake to add support for either category.

In responding to all of the concerns expressed in the varying letters, the department reviewed the data to reconfirm that quality assurance requirements were met on the samples represented in the assessment, analyzed the data based on the location of the samples, and provided that information in a detailed table attached to the letter. This assessment resulted in better describing three portions of Moses Lake where the phosphorus levels are a concern, and one portion, at the south end of Parker Horn, where the data indicates a problem with excess phosphorus.

The data we assessed met quality assurance procedures and is considered by the department to be credible data. Although you mention in your letter that there is data related to waterfowl excrement in Moses Lake, it was not provided to us and therefore was not assessed. If it had been, I would expect Moses Lake to be listed for fecal coliform pollution, which is one of the lead indicators of warm blooded feces.

I recognize that you may still have questions that you feel are unanswered regarding the data and technical assessment of phosphorus for Moses Lake. I asked our Environmental Assessment Program staff to respond to these questions, which are included in the five attachments to this letter. However, if you are still unsatisfied with our response, I believe the next step should be to set up a time to meet in person and go over the details together.



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On a positive note, the City of Moses Lake finds the current listing process for Moses Lake appropriate and reasonable, and has expressed an interest in taking a lead role in improving the waters of Moses Lake. We are currently working with them and other interested stakeholders to conduct the necessary monitoring to determine what further work needs to be done. Also, the proposed Columbia River Initiative contains some features that, if implemented, would result in additional flows of high quality irrigation project waters through the lake. In the meantime, the Moses Lake TMDL has been put on hold and we do not plan to revisit the priority of this project until the next scoping session for that given area, which will be in 2006.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss your concerns further if that would be helpful. If so, please call my secretary, Diane Smith, at 360-407-6448 to arrange a time.

Sincerely,



David C. Peeler

Water Quality Program Manager

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Response to general questions on Moses Lake
- Attachment 2: Revised map of Moses Lake Listings
- Attachment 3: Revised Table of Moses Lake Listings
- Attachment 4: Analysis Summary of phosphorus data
- Attachment 5: Memo from Dean Momohara of Ecology's Manchester lab