

May 31, 2005

Mr. Dave McClure
WRIA 30 Watershed Planning Coordinator
Klickitat County Planning Dept.
228 West Main St. MS-CH-17
Goldendale, WA 98620

Dear Mr. McClure:

Thank you for your public comment letter received on December 17, 2004, regarding Washington State's Water Quality Assessment for 2002/2004. The department received over 45 comment letters during this last review process and is appreciative of the time you took to review and comment on this Assessment. We realize that there is an extensive amount of information in the Water Quality Assessment. The scrutiny given by you and other public reviewers has resulted in many changes and corrections that improved the accurateness of the final submittal to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Water Quality Assessment is being submitted to EPA as an "integrated report" to meet the Clean Water Act requirements of sections 305(b) and 303(d). EPA will only take approval action on Category 5 of the Assessment, which represents the state's 303(d) list. The Water Quality Assessment can be viewed at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/index.html>.

Ecology has reviewed the information you provided on stream segments on Swale Creek, involving whether a temperature listing (7962) and instream flow listing (6206) on this creek should be moved to another category because of natural conditions. We consulted with our Central Regional Office Water Quality Program staff to help determine if a natural condition call would be appropriate. Staff agreed with the description provided in the report regarding the low flows and increasing temperatures that occur in the creek on an annual basis.

The difficulty in making a natural condition call comes from trying to determine if human influences could cause or contribute to the low flows and increased temperatures. Staff agreed the watershed is in fair condition when compared to an urbanized stream or an intensively irrigated watershed, but also noted that there are many activities in the watershed that may be causing some of the conditions described in the report that could be corrected or mitigated. As an example, much of the watershed is farmed or grazed, and this could affect the area's hydrology.

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Because of the uncertainties with respect to the human influences, these listings will remain in the "impaired" status until further study of the watershed can determine the extent of the influence and what might be done to correct or mitigate them.

Thank you again for taking the time to provide comments to Ecology. If you have questions regarding the above responses, or would like further clarification, please feel free to call me at 360-407-6414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Braley".

Susan Braley
Unit Supervisor
Watershed Management Section