



October 14, 2010

Kathy Hamel, Water Quality Program
Washington Department of Ecology
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504

Subject: Draft Aquatic Plant and Algae Management General Permit Comments

Dear Ms. Hamel:

Avista Corporation (Avista) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) Draft Aquatic Plant and Algae Management General Permit (Draft Permit). Avista owns and operates the Long Lake Dam which creates a 5,060 acre reservoir, Lake Spokane, that extends 23.5 miles upstream and is located in Lincoln, Stevens, and Spokane Counties. The most recent aquatic plant survey of Lake Spokane was conducted in 2007 by AquaTechnex. This survey included mapping approximately 634 acres of aquatic noxious weeds consisting of Eurasian watermilfoil, yellow floating heart, and fragrant water lily.

Avista has a requirement through its Federal Energy Regulatory Commission License for the Spokane River Project, which includes Ecology's Section 401 Water Quality Certification to control the spread and occurrence of Eurasian watermilfoil with a primary focus on access sites. Avista is also working with Ecology and other cooperating parties to monitor and control existing exotic aquatic weeds and any new exotic aquatic weeds that may become established in Lake Spokane.

In reading through the Draft Permit, Avista's main concern is in regard to the "*Recommended Fish and Wildlife Treatment Windows for Ecology's Aquatic Plant and Algae Management Permit*" completed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), dated April 2010. The Draft Permit indicates the Permittee must follow the WDFW treatment windows, and that WDFW may periodically update this table as new information becomes available. The following are concerns regarding the two-week treatment window (September 1 through 15) identified for Lake Spokane and the Spokane Canal.

Restrictive Treatment Window

Avista believes the WDFW recommended two-week treatment window in September for Lake Spokane and the Spokane Canal is much too restrictive. It is Avista's understanding that treating Lake Spokane's noxious weeds is most effective early in the growing season, typically in June or July, when most aquatic weeds are actively growing and would quickly take up herbicide placed in the water. This is also the time when plant biomass is lower and the decomposition of treated weeds would have less effect on water quality, especially dissolved oxygen.

Restricting control options to a two-week timeframe early in September would severely impact the control of noxious aquatic plants in Lake Spokane. This two-week timeframe is even further restricted, as it falls over the Labor Day holiday weekend under which Ecology restricts

treatment applications. Without the ability to control noxious weeds, Lake Spokane is vulnerable to further water quality degradation and possible negative impacts to recreation and fish.

Avista recommends Ecology provide a broader and more effective treatment window, such as a June through August timeframe, so that noxious aquatic weeds can be adequately controlled in Lake Spokane.

Treatment Window Updates

According to WDFW, the two-week treatment timeframe was based upon known occurrence of the following Lake Spokane priority species: native wild redband trout, burbot, Kokanee, and mountain whitefish. The WDFW treatment timing table includes the following note with regard to the identified "Priority species known occurrence":

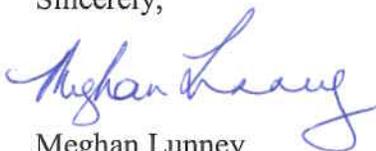
"Priority species known occurrence: This column lists species on WDFW's Priority Habitats and Species List that are known to occupy each lake. This information, in conjunction with PHS Management Recommendations and review of WDFW biologists, was used to develop the treatment windows. The PHS List and Management Recommendations can be found online at: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hab/phspage.htm>."

Avista was unable to access the website identified above and therefore unable to review the documentation identifying the priority habitats and species known to occupy Lake Spokane. Avista requests this information for review with regard to its application of the treatment window timeframe(s).

In addition, Avista recommends revising the periodic update of the table as new information becomes available. Avista would recommend a process in which any new information on the priority habitats and species be documented in peer-reviewed scientific paper(s) and made available for public review prior to any revision to the treatment window timeframes.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Permit and please feel free to call me at (509) 495-4643 if you have any questions with our comments.

Sincerely,



Meghan Lunney
Aquatic Resource Specialist

Cc: Marcie Mangold, Ecology