

EQC allows 180,000 acres of burning

By JOHN RIMEL
Of the Emerald

The state Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) approved a one-year field burning plan to allow 180,000 acres of grass straw to be burned this summer, at its meeting Friday in Eugene.

Eugene city officials objected to the plan because it allows grass-seed growers to burn fields within three miles of Eugene even if the wind is blowing towards the city.

The field burning plan, though approved by the EQC, must still meet the approval of the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) before the 180,000 acre limit can be made official.

While the state recognizes the 180,000 acre limit set by the 1977 Legislature, the EPA only recognizes the 50,000 acre limit established by the 1975 Legislature.

The EPA has said the state



Emerald Graphic

with pollution from the concentration of about 8,500 septic tanks in the area.

The commission heard testimony from residents who opposed the proposed six-month moratorium.

One of the witnesses, Jeff Siegel, presented the commission with figures on nitrate levels in River Road-Santa Clara area wells. He said the nitrate levels were approximately one-half the level the EPA requires for safe drinking water standards.

Another of the witnesses, George Kramer, aide to County commissioner Archie Weinstein, presented figures that showed the nitrate levels in a random selection of wells in Eugene to be similar to those in wells in the River Road-Santa Clara area, even though Eugene is sewered while River Road-Santa Clara is not.

When it postponed the decision on the septic tank moratorium, the EQC requested its staff to continue research to determine whether a moratorium is justified.

The commission also declared that the new limits on discharge of ammonia by Teledyne Wah Chang at Albany are reasonable and that the company should be fined \$200 for each day of violation. The discharge of ammonia is not to exceed 400 pounds per day on a monthly average.

The DEQ had been fining Wah Chang \$50 a day for violation of the limit. The federal EPA has said the \$50-a-day fine is too low.

must allow only 50,000 acres of burning unless it can show it will be able to reduce pollution from non-field-burning sources — enough to offset the additional pollution caused by burning 180,000 acres.

John Kowalczyk, Department of Environmental Quality supervisor the technical services, outlined the department's strategy for 1978:

- Preventing burning when straw moisture is high.
- Burning into the wind.
- Controlling road dust in Springfield.
- Controlling industrial emissions in the Eugene-Springfield area.

The combined pollution reductions created by the elements of

the strategy should remove from the air the particulates that would result from at least 144,000 acres of field burning, he said.

The commission's approval of the plan was made despite the objections of Stan Long, Eugene city attorney. Long told the commission the plan should include rules limiting field burning near Eugene when the wind is blowing from the north.

The commission also issued a one-month delay in imposing a septic tank permit moratorium on the River Road-Santa Clara area. The moratorium was requested by the Lane County Commissioners.

The county commissioners expressed concern over the possibility of health problems from ground water that might be contaminated



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