

## Washington

# Ecology fines livestock owner over water pollution

DOE: Cattle had 'unfettered' access to stream

By DON JENKINS  
Capital Press

A Northwest Washington couple has been fined \$12,000 for allowing cattle to pollute water that flows into Drayton Harbor, a body long plagued by high levels of fecal coliform bacteria, the state Department of Ecology said Wednesday.

Jim and Victoria Snyder of Ferndale have up to about 40 cows that have unfettered access to a stream and cross it where the ground is largely bare, according to DOE records. The stream is a tributary of California Creek, which drains into the harbor in Whatcom County.

Recreation and commercial shellfish harvests in the harbor

have been limited because of pollution.

Water samples taken in 2014 consistently showed water flowing off the Snyders' property to have high concentrations of bacteria, according to DOE.

"The problems on this property are significant, but can be addressed with commonly used practices," Doug Allen, manager of DOE's Bellingham office, said in a written statement.

"We've made repeated attempts to work with the Snyders to help them make changes that would prevent pollution," Allen said. "It's unfortunate that we've gotten to this point."

DOE penalties may be appealed to the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board. Efforts to reach the Snyders were not successful.

The DOE also claimed that manure on the property was inadequately covered, improperly spread and accumulated in pastures and pens that slope toward water. The fine specifically stemmed from two water samples taken immediately downstream from the property.

The first sample, taken March 3, 2014, found bacteria levels 85 times greater than the state limit, according to DOE. The second sample, taken April 17, 2014, showed bacteria levels 46 times higher. Each sample resulted in a \$6,000 penalty.

The DOE says it notified the Snyders about the water

tests in July of 2014, but received no response. In April of this year, DOE sent another notice giving the Snyders until June to present a pollution-control plan.

DOE spokeswoman Krista Kenner said the Snyders did not respond. "The best-case scenario is that the fine gets his attention," she said.

DOE enforcement records show no other fines levied against a livestock owner since a Skagit County farmer was penalized \$1,000 in 2012 for not preventing manure from draining into ditches leading to a tributary of the Samish River.

In 2013, the state Supreme Court upheld DOE's penalties levied in 2009 against East-ern Washington rancher Joe Lemire.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File

The Environmental Protection Agency and Washington Department of Ecology believe chemicals formerly used at the Freeman, Wash., grain-handling facility, pictured March 30, have gotten into the groundwater. They are considering plans to clean up the area.

## Ecology to order cleanup of old grain facility

Department seeks public comment on proposed enforcement

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

The Washington Department of Ecology plans to order two companies to clean up pollution at a grain-handling facility in Freeman, Wash.

Ecology is seeking public comment on the proposed enforcement order until Nov. 2. The order would require Union Pacific Railroad and CHS Inc. to investigate contamination at the grain handling facility and study ways to clean it up.

Carbon tetrachloride and chloroform were found in soil samples collected at the grain handling facility. Contaminants found in ground water samples from the nearby Freeman School District's primary drinking water supply well included those chemicals at concentrations above the Safe Drinking Water Act's maximum contaminant levels, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Carbon tetrachloride was historically used as a fumigant. The chemical was outlawed in the mid-1980s.

The seasonally used grain

elevator is considered a Superfund site by the EPA. The Superfund program is aimed at cleaning up uncontrolled hazardous waste sites.

CHS Primeland owns the grain facility, which is built on property owned by the railroad. CHS Primeland leases the land from the railroad.

Ken Blakeman, general manager of CHS Primeland in Lewiston, Idaho, said his company would contest any order through the legal process.

"The chemical has not been used by us," he said. "They've never shown any proof that this is the source. Unfortunately, the way the process works through Ecology and the EPA, you're proven guilty before you get to prove yourself innocent."

"Union Pacific does not agree with (Ecology's) findings," said Francisco Castillo, a spokesman for the railroad. "However, we'll continue to work with the department on this issue."

Blakeman questioned Ecology's testing on the facility and school site.

"It's underneath the facility, we don't dispute that," he said. "We haven't used it, and we don't believe we're the source. We all have it underneath the ground. It could come from many sources — machine shops (or) solvent used in the bus garage."

## Bluetongue cases increase among wildlife, livestock

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

More instances of bluetongue virus have been found in Washington and Idaho deer and livestock than usual, the head of Washington's animal diagnostic laboratory says.

Most of the samples submitted to the Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory were from white-tailed deer.

Other affected species included domestic sheep, bighorn sheep, mule deer, cows and a yak.

In all, the laboratory has confirmed the virus in 42 animals from Washington and Idaho.

The disease is caused by a virus transmitted by midges or gnats. It is not transferred between animals or to humans, said Tim Baszler, executive director of the diagnostic laboratory in Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine.

"As the gnats and midges go away, the problem will go away," he said. "There seems to be more activity than usual, probably because of the dry summer we had."

The lab detected bluetongue in animals from Whitman, Spokane, Asotin, Garfield, Pend Oreille and Stevens counties in Washington and Latah, Clearwater, Canyon and Nez Perce counties in Idaho. Samples from cattle and bighorn sheep submitted from Churchill and Mineral counties in Nevada were also confirmed to have bluetongue virus, according to a WSU press release.

Cattle and goats tend to be more resistant, Baszler said, but sheep and deer often die from the disease.

The virus infects blood vessels and animals get fluids in their lungs or hemorrhage.

The lab is working to identify the strains of the virus to determine the proper vaccine, Baszler said.

Producers in the affected areas, particularly sheep ranchers, should take whatever actions they can to protect their animals from insects or contact their local veterinarian about vaccine possibilities, Baszler said. He said gnats and midges are plentiful in areas with water and vegetation.



Courtesy of Washington State University

This is an artist's rendering of the new Washington Grains Plant Growth Facility on the Washington State University campus in Pullman. It will be dedicated on Oct. 17.

## WSU to dedicate new plant growth facility

Farmers can call to arrange tour

By MATTHEW WEAVER  
Capital Press

Washington State University will mark the opening of its \$15 million plant growth facility with a dedication ceremony Oct. 17.

The building "epitomizes" the partnership between WSU Extension, the Washington Grain Commission and USDA Agricultural Research Service, said Rich Koenig, associate dean of the WSU College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences and director of WSU

Extension.

The facility opened in late summer and is occupied by the WSU and USDA wheat breeding programs. In addition to greenhouse space, it offers room for the WSU doubled haploid laboratory, which is designed to speed up the wheat-breeding process, allowing breeders to save years when selecting key wheat traits. It also includes an herbicide spray room for controlled applications for research and controlled-environment seed storage, Koenig said.

WSU and the commission each paid \$5 million for construction of the building, while the research service's allocation paid for growth

chambers, Koenig said.

"They can't fund a building, but they can fund things within a building," he said.

The dedication ceremony is invitation-only due to space limitations, but farmers interested in a tour of the facility can contact Koenig's office at 509-335-2933 or Agricultural Research Center director Jim Moyer's office at 509-335-4563.

Koenig credited the commission with helping to remove bottlenecks from the plant-breeding process through its support for the facility, the doubled haploid lab and investments in the USDA ARS genotyping lab.

The plant growth facil-

ity came about because the commission asked WSU the single biggest limiting factor in developing new wheat varieties. The response was a lack of greenhouse space, Koenig said.

"This will allow those breeding programs to reduce the amount of time it takes from cross to getting varieties into the field and into growers' hands," Koenig said.

The ceremony will honor the long partnership between all three entities, Koenig said. In the 1950s, the then-Washington Wheat Commission was organized and began supporting USDA and WSU research at the university, he said.



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