

Washington Ecology sets rules for winery wastewater

Permit fee to be determined

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Beginning next year an estimated 100 Washington wineries will need a permit from the Department of Ecology to discharge wastewater.

The rules that come with a permit will set limits on irrigating with water recycled after cleaning bottles, barrels, tanks and other equipment. The rules also will regulate storage ponds and watering down dusty roads. Ecology says the permits will keep water laced with cleansers, stems and wine sediment from contaminating groundwater.

Ecology has not determined how much a permit will cost, nor has it documented a case of groundwater pollution caused by a Washington winery.

"A lack of evidence does not mean groundwater is not being impacted," according to an Ecology response to comments on the plan.

Wineries that generate at least 53,505 gallons of wastewater a year will come under a regulatory approach used by Ecology to control wastewater from other industries, including fruit packers and vegetable processors. Ecology projects that wineries that make less than 17,835 gallons of wine a year will be exempt from the rules.

There are nearly 1,000 licensed wineries in Washington, according to the state Department of Agriculture. Although most wineries won't need a permit, the rules will apply to vintners who make 98 percent of the state's wine, Ecology estimates.

Ecology finalized the



Washington Department of Ecology

Beginning in mid-2019, an estimated 100 Washington wineries will need a permit from the state Department of Ecology to discharge wastewater. The department says the permit will protect groundwater.

rules Thursday, though they won't take effect until July 1, 2019. The department says it will give wineries time to prepare to meet their new obligations.

Ecology proposed the rules in November. Some commenters said the rules were too costly and expansive. Some complimented Ecology for consulting the wine industry in writing the rules. Efforts to reach several of those who commented were unsuccessful.

Some 14 wineries already are operating under Ecology-issued wastewater permits. Ecology either required the permits because the winery had a potential to pollute, or the winery sought a permit to head off being penalized for discharging pollutants.

The new permit will set industry-wide standards. Ecology spokeswoman Jessica Payne said the uniform set of rules will put wineries on an equal footing. "I believe

the purpose of regulations is to level the playing field," she said.

Ecology will set fees in the coming year based on wine production. Currently, the fee for a winery to have an individual wastewater permit is \$6,731 a year.

The rules will not apply to brewers, distillers, or cider or mead makers. The exemptions drew some complaints from wine makers. Ecology said it will focus on wineries first, but did not rule out writing rules later for the others.

The rules will not apply to wineries that discharge their wastewater to one of 20 treatment plants around the state equipped to handle industrial waste.

For those who must have a permit, the conditions will limit the days and the amount they can irrigate. The conditions also will require assessing storage ponds, testing wastewa-

ter and monitoring flows. Permit holders will have to write pollution-prevention plans and train employees to prevent, respond to and report spills.

Ecology could levy penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation. Everyday that passes without a problem being fixed can count as a separate violation.

If a winery generates more than 6 gallons of wastewater for every gallon of wine, it must find ways to use less water.

Ecology cited two cases of water-quality problems caused by wineries, though neither affected groundwater. A winery's stems and skins lowered oxygen levels in wastewater discharged from a treatment plant in 2005. In 2009, a winery harmed a stream by releasing wastewater into a storm drain. The problem was spotted when water in a ditch turned purple.

Idaho issues final notice on groundwater flow meters; state inspections starting

By **BRAD CARLSON**
Capital Press

The Idaho Department of Water Resources on May 17 issued a final notice to more than 400 Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer groundwater irrigators who have yet to comply with an order requiring them to install approved flow meters on pumps.

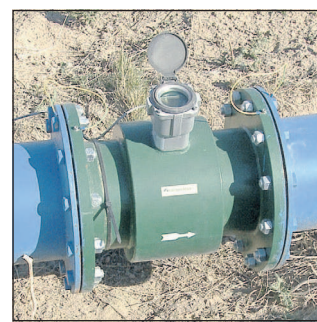
The requirement stems from a 2015 settlement between groundwater users and a coalition of surface-water users as well as a 2016 order from IDWR Director Gary Spackman. The director's notice requires the installations by the start of the 2018 irrigation season, which is already underway. More accurate measurement of groundwater usage and better reporting are among the goals.

The department is sending notices to ESPA groundwater users authorized to irrigate more than 5 acres. Watermasters will be authorized to curtail water use from non-compliant irrigation wells after June 1. Groundwater users who have not installed a department-approved measuring device also may be subject to a formal IDWR enforcement action.

Instructions in the final notice direct groundwater irrigators to contact the department if they have installed groundwater flow meters, Deputy Director Matthew Weaver said in a statement.

"If they haven't installed a flow meter, they need to get into compliance immediately or they will be curtailed," he said.

The flow meters provide a much more accurate measurement of groundwater usage than the previous system that looked at power



IDWR

Flow meters are required for groundwater irrigators on the Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer.

records, IDWR spokesman Steve Stuebner said in an interview. Groundwater users, in the 2015 settlement with the Surface Water Coalition — which consists largely of surface-water irrigators and aquaculture operators — agreed to reduce their usage by about 240,000 acre-feet, or 13 percent per year. A user's required reduction can vary based on water right seniority.

The department estimates at least 80 percent of the approximately 5,500 affected groundwater users are in full compliance. The Eastern Snake Plain Aquifer underlies much of south-central and eastern Idaho.

Department staff is conducting wide-scale field inspections on public and private property of all qualifying wells. That continues through summer, with an increased field presence beginning June 1. Priority will be given to wells the department believes are not in compliance with the order based on lack of response to department notices or previous inspections.

IDWR sent reminder letters to qualifying well owners in June 2017 and March 2018.

Columbia River Treaty negotiations to begin on May 29-30

Capital Press

The U.S. and Canada will begin negotiations to modernize the Columbia River Treaty May 29-30 in Washington, D.C.

The U.S. Department of State announced the negotiation start date May 22 in a press release.

Certain provisions of the treaty are set to expire in 2024.

Key objectives include continued, careful management of flood risk; ensuring a reliable and economical power supply and better addressing ecosystem concerns, according to the press release.

"The 1964 treaty's flood risk and hydropower operations have provided substantial benefits to millions of people on both sides of the border," the press release states. "The treaty, a worldwide model for transboundary water cooperation, has also facilitated additional benefits such as supporting the river's ecosystem, irrigation, municipal water use, industrial use, navigation and recreation. Modernizing the treaty regime will ensure these benefits continue for years to come."

The U.S. negotiating team will be led by the State Department and includes the Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Northwest Division — both comprising the "U.S. entity" that implements the treaty in the United States. Also included are the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Chief negotiator Jill Smal said during a town hall in Spokane she was confident the U.S. and Canada will find common ground in the talks.



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