

Toxic: DEQ says no pesticides detected in local water supply

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and once home in Walla Walla, contacted Oregon DEQ. The report that Blue Mountain Divers filed included photographs and videos of one of the 55-gallon barrels, showing the 2,4-D 2,4,5-T label. Their report also noted that they did not know whether the barrels were full or empty, or how long they had been in the lake. But what alarmed them was that “the ingredients in 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T were nearly identical to the infamous Agent Orange, and also a known carcinogen,” Blue Mountain Divers said in their report.

Wallowa Lake is the primary source of drinking water for Joseph.

In their response to Blue Mountain Divers’ complaint, Oregon DEQ noted “Drums have been found at the lake bottom for years, a remnant of when empty drums were used extensively at the lake to anchor docks. It was common practice at the time for people to fill the drums with water, rocks or cement and anchor the drums with rope to floating docks. Drums were also commonly used to provide flotation to docks. Over the years, as the docks disintegrated or were removed or abandoned, many of the drums remained, especially those used as anchors.”

Nevertheless, DEQ coordinated with EPA in analyzing and resolving the problem. Although no pesticides or herbicides have been detected in Joseph’s drinking water, the fact that the drums were discovered in an area where nothing similar had been found before was a concern. EPA made the decision to remove the barrels from Wallowa Lake.

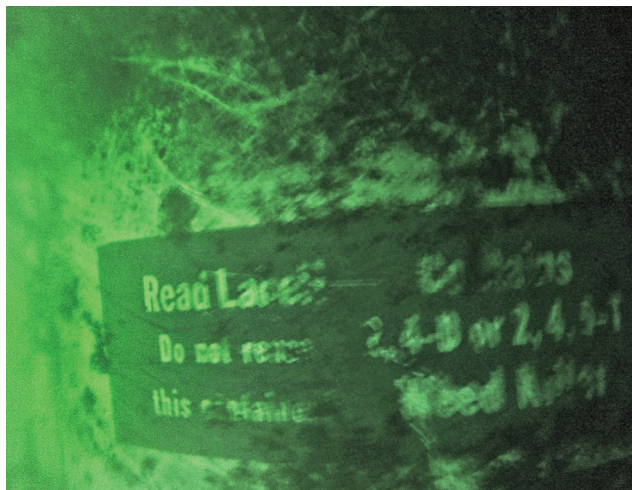


Ellen Morris Bishop

The barrels labeled 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T are located off the Wallowa Lake State Park Marina, and lie beneath 50 to 120 feet of water.

At the EPA’s request, Blue Mountain Divers will help them relocate the barrels so that commercial HazMat divers under contract to EPA could remove the barrels from Wallowa Lake. Later this month Blue Mountain Divers plans a dive to relocate what the EPA has termed “historic drums”. “We are going to use negative buoyant cord, similar to that used in cave diving, to help them find the barrels,” Anderson said. “The negatively-buoyant string won’t get snagged by fishing lines.”

“The EPA and DEQ are collaborating to develop a plan to recover the barrels—especially the larger, seemingly intact ones,” said Mike Boykin, project coordinator for DEQ. The present idea is to remove the entire collection of barrels and drums in fall, 2019—probably in late



Labels on drums and barrels found at between 50 and 120 feet of water off the marina at the south end of Wallowa Lake are labeled 2,4-D or 2,4,5-T.

September or October, once tourism and lake use has subsided, and also when there is no conflict with fish spawning. They plan to engage an independent commercial dive contractor who would use “Hard-Hat” fully-suited

divers to locate the subsurface containers, roll each of the 100-gallon barrels into a bigger drum, seal that larger container, and hoist it to the surface where it would be placed on a barge. “Each of those bigger, sealed contain-

ers could weigh a half-ton or more,” Boykin said. “So the equipment needs to be up to the job. The barge can’t just be a rowboat. It has to be stable and sturdy.”

Although it’s unknown whether the larger barrels (or for that matter, some smaller 55 gallon drums) are 1) still intact and still contain herbicide, or 2) were empty when placed in the lake and are now merely filled with water, or 3) were once part of a pier foundation and are weighted down by concrete, the plan is to treat them all as hazardous material.

The project will likely take about a week. It is considered a “superfund” cleanup or, technically, a CERCLA action—Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980, and will be funded by EPA under that act.

“We want to be sure everything stays clean, and we do this right,” Boykin said. “If the barrels are still full and they open up, the first thing that you’ll see is likely to be a fish kill. We don’t want to take any chances of that happening.”

The plan for safe removal of these barrels is still under development. Before a date can be set, there will be consultation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Nez Perce Fisheries to ensure there is no conflict with fish spawning or migration. Wallowa Lake State Park will have a say in the plan. Local festivals, including the Dragon Boat races that occur at the south end of the lake will also have input.

Although no 2,4-D or 2,4,5-T have been detected in Joseph’s drinking water, DEQ will carefully monitor the water quality in both Wallowa Lake and in Joseph’s treated drinking water while the divers are recovering the suspicious barrels. To date, DEQ has not tested the water in Wallowa Lake. “If some product has leaked out in the past,” said DEQ project coordinator Jamie Collins, “some of it may have degraded into other chemicals. Some of it may be stored in the lake bed sediments, and some of it may be in the water column.”

“When I was at the site in May, I talked with the city administrator and also the mayor of Joseph. Once we have a better idea of when we will be doing the work, we want to have a public meeting to present our plan so residents can understand what’s going on, ask questions, and have some input.” Boykin said.

States Approve Water Quality Plan for Hells Canyon Hydro Projects

BOISE, Idaho, May 28, 2019 — Idaho Power has taken a major step toward a new federal license for its largest hydroelectric project: Idaho and Oregon have certified the company’s plan for meeting water quality standards in the Snake River as part of its operation of three dams in Hells Canyon.

Section 401 of the federal Clean Water Act requires the company to produce a plan to meet state water quality standards as part of the relicensing process. Because Hells Canyon is on the Idaho–Oregon border, both states must approve the company’s plan (commonly called a 401 certification).

The plan’s acceptance, announced late Friday, is a significant move forward in the company’s application to relicense Brownlee, Oxbow and Hells Canyon dams. Together, those projects provide about 70% of the company’s hydroelectric generation and are the backbone of Idaho Power’s clean energy

mix. The original license for the complex expired in 2005, and the company has operated the dams on a series of annual licenses since then.

Under the plan, Idaho Power commits to a wide range of water-quality improvement measures. Some have been developed and tested over the past several years, while others will be implemented when the company receives a new long-term license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

“Receiving the 401s from the states is a huge milestone for the company,” said Brett Dumas, Director of Environmental Affairs for Idaho Power. “This allows us to move forward with relicensing our most valuable asset. And, it clears the way for a tremendous number of projects to improve the environment of the Snake River while Idaho Power continues to provide safe, reliable, clean energy into the future.”

Idaho Power has pro-

posed an extensive series of upstream river restoration measures, including the Snake River Stewardship Program, to address water temperatures in the Snake River.

One major component of the company’s plan includes projects to narrow and deepen key stretches of the Snake River between Walters Ferry and Homedale, which improves natural river function and habitat. Working with landowners, the company has begun planting thousands of native trees and shrubs along tributaries of the Snake River to provide shade. Both measures will help decrease water temperatures.

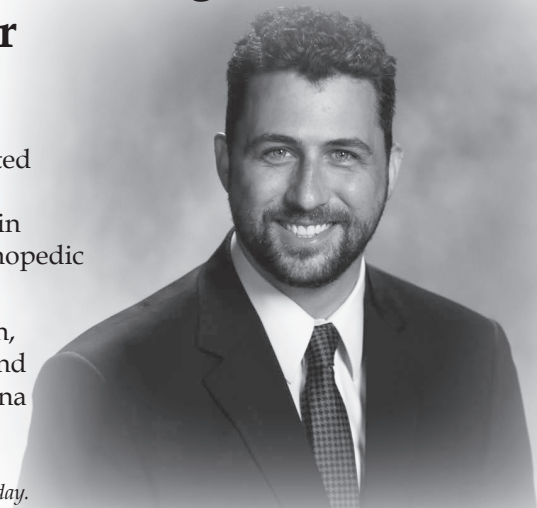
Additional steps include funding for improvements, such as pressurized sprinkler irrigation to reduce runoff from agricultural land, equipment to increase the oxygen in water released from Brownlee Dam and spillway modifications to minimize dissolved gases, which can harm fish.

The company has already launched a 10-year study of mercury levels in Brownlee and Hells Canyon reservoirs in coordination with the U.S. Geological Survey. The 401 plan also proposes lowering Brownlee Reservoir in unusually warm years to reduce water temperatures during downstream salmon spawning.

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- Internship and Residency completed in orthopedic surgery at Affinity Medical Center, Ohio; Fellowship in sports medicine completed at Orthopedic Research of Virginia, Richmond
- Served four years as flight surgeon, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia and Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina

Dr. Heisinger will be seeing patients at Wallowa Memorial Hospital regularly for clinic visits and surgery. Ask your physician for a referral today.



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