

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - Aug. 3, 2011

Washington Department of Ecology

11-219

Public invited to meeting/hearing on draft water quality discharge permit for new Spokane County treatment plant

SPOKANE - The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is planning a public meeting and formal public hearing on Wed., Aug. 10, 2011 on the draft water quality discharge permit for the new Spokane County Regional Water Reclamation Facility. The permit is designed to improve and protect the water quality of the Spokane River.

The meeting, which will provide people an opportunity to ask questions followed by formal testimony, will begin at 6 p.m. Aug. 10, 2011, at the Spokane Regional Health District Auditorium, 1101 West College Avenue. The formal public hearing begins at 7 p.m.

People can see the permit on Ecology's website at:
http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/eastern_permits.html. Formal comments are due to Ecology by Aug. 26, 2011. Send comments to Shara-Li Joy, water quality permit coordinator, Washington State Department of Ecology, 4601 N. Monroe St., Spokane, Wash, 99205-1295 or stra461@ecy.wa.gov.

The state-of-the-art plant will process up to eight million gallons of wastewater created each day in the Spokane Valley. The city's Spokane Riverside Park Water Reclamation Facility is currently treating this water.

The permit is called a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, or NPDES permit. It sets limits in the amount of several pollutants that the county's facility can discharge into the Spokane River without violating Washington's water quality standards. The permit conforms to the federal Clean Water Act.

Excessive phosphorus in the Spokane River has caused severe dissolved oxygen depletion in the Spokane River and Lake Spokane. Phosphorus and other nutrients such as ammonia encourage the growth of algae and other aquatic plants. When the plants decompose, they use up oxygen in the water, suffocating fish.

The permit imposes strict requirements relating to PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls. The permit includes an aggressive monitoring plan for PCBs in the county's discharge and aggressive activities to control sources of PCBs. The permit also requires the county to participate in a Regional Toxics Task Force that will guide work toward reducing PCBs and other toxic pollution.

###

Media Contact: Jani Gilbert, Communications, 509-329-3495; cell, 509-990-9177; e-mail
jani.gilbert@ecy.wa.gov.

For more information: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/index.html>

Ecology's Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

###