
From: Gordon Kelly [mailto:homeinspectorinc@elltel.net]
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2009 5:58 PM
To: Mark D. McClain
Subject: Comments - DOE/Kittitas County Memorandum of Agreement

As I will be unable to attend the public meeting you are holding Thursday, August 13. I offer the following as comments for your consideration:

1. I find it interesting that the term "exempt" wells are no longer being considered exempt. It seems to me that it was likely the legislative intent, those many years ago, that these types of wells were not supposed to subject to regulatory control.
2. R.C.W 19.27.097 places the authority (and responsibility) to determine the adequacy of a potable water supply with the building permitting authority.
3. I recognize the Department of Ecology (DOE) has authority (and responsibility) for water resources and water rights.
4. I believe DOE's argument for an emergency is fallacious. For example, if you come to an agreement, then some well drilling will be allowed. They very shortly backed off on allowing already vested projects to proceed. If there was truly an emergency, it doesn't make sense that any drilling would be allowed.
5. I have lived in the Valley for 40 years. DOE and the Bureau of Reclamation and others have been given money to study the water resource availability over the past decades. No results. I've also see DOE get state dollars to process the backlog of water rights applications. To my knowledge, this has not happened. I don't believe they have been responsible in this area.
6. The expressed concern of DOE has been the protection of senior water rights, especially those in surface water or those groundwater sources in continuity with surface water. If you have someone drill a well into a deeper aquifer (not in continuity with surface water), they will in reality, be bringing water into the shallow aquifers. As this water is utilized through domestic uses, a significant portion of this liquid will reenter the shallow aquifer through the septic system drainfield or directly through irrigation. It will follow the same path as precipitation, minus the amount that is lost through evapotranspiration (the same way precipitation does). Water withdrawn from a shallow aquifer would follow the same pathway, except losing from the shallow aquifer that percentage lost through evapotranspiration.
7. If we take the DOE statement regarding "3000 new wells drilled since 1998" at face value and look at the amount of water that translates to, my concern diminishes regarding water resource depletion. It is almost an imperceptible amount. If 3000 wells use 500 gallons per day (reasonable estimate for domestic use), that yields 1,500,000 gallons. Translate this amount into acre/feet equals 4.57 acre feet per day. This is based on assumptions that each of the 3000 wells will withdraw the 500 gallons per day, every day. It is my opinion that is unlikely. Further the amount of loss from evapotranspiration diminishes significantly from November through February.

In conclusion, I am concerned that DOE is creating a crisis when reality says there is not one. They have been irresponsible in the past regarding determination of groundwater quantity. I don't believe they are taking into account the reality of recharge return flows that domestic uses provide, which diminishes the impact they are attempting to demonstrate.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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