

EPA NEWS

First-of-its-kind Agreement Sets Course to Keep Puyallup River Healthy

In an agreement believed to be the first of its kind in the country, more than 20 parties in Pierce County, Washington—representing industry, Indian tribes, citizen and environmental groups, local governments, and state and federal environmental agencies—have set a course that allows future growth in the Puyallup River watershed while protecting water quality.

The agreement was announced last month by three of its major sponsors, the Washington Department of Ecology, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Puyallup Indian Tribe.

EPA regards the agreement as a landmark in water quality management. According to Phil Millam, EPA's regional water director, "The agreement strikes a balance between growth in the Puyallup watershed and the need for a healthy river. The parties to the agreement have individually committed themselves to actions that collectively will make sure wastewater discharges won't overload the Puyallup with effluent that would cause violations of state water quality standards."

"Almost as important as the agreement itself is the process by which it was reached," said Bob Duffy of Ecology's water quality program. "The groups that produce pollution were asked to devise their own plan — state and federal agencies did not tell them how to do it."

The agreement, over a year in the making, focuses on pollutants commonly discharged by municipal sewage treatment plants and industries: ammonia and other

substances which create a biochemical oxygen demand. Ammonia can have a toxic effect on fish and other aquatic wildlife. Substances that place a biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) on the river deplete the water of oxygen needed to support fish.

Although the Puyallup River currently meets state water quality standards for dissolved oxygen and ammonia, a 1994 Ecology water quality study of the river identified the potential for future prob-

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Spotlight to showcase success stories and environmental stars



Ecosystem to provide news that goes beyond water topics



Tools to clue you in on resources, publications, opportunities, and services

lems. As a result, Ecology set limits on the river's "reserve capacity" for handling BOD and ammonia. The agreement sets forth a plan allocating the reserve capacity so it will never be exhausted and the river's health will be protected well into the future.

Participants in the agreement represent a broad cross-section of interests. Cities have a stake because their wastewater treatment plants' discharges and runoff from their streets affect the river. Industries are involved due to the large amounts of water they discharge. The Puyallup Tribe of Indians and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe were included because of their land ownership and their regard for protecting natural resources. Also, the Puyallup Tribe has been delegated federal CleanWater Act authority to administer water quality standards in the Puyallup River within its reservation.

In addition to the Puyallups, the Muckleshoots, Ecology, and EPA, the parties to the agreement are: Pierce County, City of Bonney Lake, Beatrice Cheese Company, City of Buckley, Matsushita Semiconductor, City of Enumclaw, Sonoco Products, City of Orting, Town of Carbonado, City of Puyallup, Town of South Prairie, City of Sumner, Town of Wilkeson, City of Tacoma, Trout Unlimited, Citizens for a Healthy Bay, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.

For more information regarding the agreement, contact Alan Henning, EPA, at 206/553-8293 or 1-800-424-4EPA x8293, or E-Mail: henning.alan@epamail.epa.gov.



EPA Seeks Comment on Clean Water Program

On July 7, EPA published a notice in the FEDERAL REGISTER seeking public comment on the future of many aspects of the water quality standards program. The **Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on the Water Quality Standards Regulation** requests comment about possible regulatory and policy changes to strengthen and modernize the water quality standards regulation, including facilitating watershed approaches. EPA will take comments until January 4, 1999, and will hold three public meetings. The first meeting will be held August 27 and 28 in Philadelphia. Two additional meetings, specific locations yet undetermined, will be held in the midwest and west in late September and October. The FEDERAL REGISTER notice and information on the public meetings are available on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/OST/Rules/anprm.html>. For more information, contact Rob Wood at 202/260-9536.

Nutrient Strategy to Protect Waterways

One key goal of the President's Clean Water Action Plan---a comprehensive initiative to restore and protect America's waters---is development of water quality criteria for the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus by

the year 2000. Excess nutrients can degrade water quality, reduce oxygen levels with harmful results for aquatic life, and may contribute to microbial diseases such as *pfisteria*. In June, EPA released a national strategy that outlines the approach for developing numeric criteria for nutrients and adopting nutrient provisions of state water quality standards (clean water goals). Under the strategy, EPA will prepare nutrient guidance documents for waterbodies such as rivers, lakes, coastal waters, and wetlands over the next several years. States can use these documents as they develop numeric criteria for nutrients as part of state water quality standards. The Nutrient Strategy is available on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/OST>. Or, call Mike Letourneau, EPA, at 206/553-1687 or 1-800-424-4EPA x1687, or email letourneau.mike@epamail.epa.gov.

Clean Water Strategy Documents Chart Future Course

In June, EPA released the **Water Quality Criteria and Standards Plan**, which presents a vision and strategy for EPA, states, and tribes to work together over the next decade to improve water quality standards. The Plan describes seven new program initiatives that EPA will undertake in the coming years. It will be available soon on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/OST/standards/quality.html> or contact Bill Swietlick at 202/260-9569.

On June 10, EPA released the **National Water Program Agenda for 1998-1999**. The

Water Agenda presents how the Clean Water Action Plan and the new Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments fit into EPA's Office of Water's broader planning activities for its goal to achieve clean and safe water. Over the coming year, EPA will finalize a multi-year plan that integrates the steps needed to implement the Clean Water Action Plan, the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments, the Office of Water's tribal strategy, and other long term activities of the agency. The National Water Program Agenda can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/OW/ownews/agenfin.html>.

Clean Water Action Plan Available

The President's **Clean Water Action Plan**, featured in the May 98 issue of WaterTalk, represents a comprehensive new initiative to restore and protect our nation's waters. The plan emphasizes collaborative strategies built around watersheds and the communities they sustain. Containing 111 action items, the plan focuses on preventing polluted runoff, protecting human health and habitat, improving federal coordination, supporting community based planning, and increasing funding for clean water. Free copies of the 89-page booklet are available from EPA's regional Public Environmental Resource Center at 1-800-424-4EPA or 206/553-1200.

National Inventory Takes Stock of America's Waters

EPA recently released its **1996 National Water Quality Inventory**, a biennial survey of the nation's water quality. Consistent with data reported in the 1994 inventory, 40 percent of the nation's surveyed waters remain too polluted for swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities. For rivers and streams, runoff from agricultural lands remains the largest sources of pollution, affecting 25 percent of all surveyed river miles. This latest report is the result of surveys conducted by states in 1994 and 1995 of 19 percent of the nation's river miles, 40 percent of lake acres, and 72 percent of estuarine square miles.

To view material related to the inventory, visit EPA's Office of Water website at <http://www.epa.gov/305b/>. Here you will find a 12-page summary entitled *Report Brochure: National Water Quality Inventory 1996 Report to Congress* (EPA 841-F-97-003), a 197-page detailed summary called *The Quality of Our Nation's Water: 1996* (EPA 841-S-97-001), and selected chapters from the 588-page *Report to Congress* (EPA 841-R-97-008). Copies are available from the National Center for Environmental Publications (NCEPI) at 1-800-490-9198. Please refer to publication numbers shown in parentheses. For more information, call George Doumani, EPA, at 202/260-3666.



Cheney Wins Wastewater Award

Not content to rest on its intake pipes, the **City of Cheney's Wastewater Treatment and Reclamation Plant** has garnered top regional honors from EPA for excellence in Operations and Maintenance. The Cheney plant demonstrated solid, all-around facility management to earn this year's award.

The Spokane County facility has a strong history of compliance with their wastewater discharge (NPDES) permit. The facility has attained superior effluent quality through consistent biosolids management, effective process control and monitoring, and good collection system, laboratory, and financial management.

According to Terry Moan, EPA regional Operations and Maintenance Coordinator, Cheney handles 2.7 million gallons of wastewater per day. "Between its innovative control of dissolved oxygen and going the extra mile to remove organic pollutants, nitrogen and phosphorous, this outfit is truly a good example of operation and maintenance excellence," said Moan. Another notable attribute of this facility is a discharge polishing regime that includes a man-made wetland.

The Operation and Maintenance Awards program, a self-nominating competition, recognizes outstanding operation of municipal sewage treatment facilities. Congratulations to Cheney for a job well done!

(continued)

For information about the award program, including guidelines and competition categories, call the following state officials:

Alaska: Kerry Lindley,
907/465-5143
Idaho: Al Stanford,
208/373-0577
Oregon: Steve Desmond,
503/229-6824
Washington: Carl Jones,
360/407-6431

Ag, Water Quality Conference... An Unusual Blend

Hundreds of farmers, environmentalists, natural resource managers, regulators, and citizens are expected to attend a conference on preserving agriculture and protecting Northwest water quality. The **Conference on Agriculture and Water Quality in the Pacific Northwest: Understanding Each Other and Working Together for a Better Future** will take place October 20-21 at the Yakima Convention Center, Washington. This unusual blend of participants and topics is designed to get generally separate groups to come together in a non-confrontational setting to build cooperation and co-mingle perspectives. Presentations will focus on applied activities rather than scientific or academic studies. The conference is sponsored by a coalition of farm associations and government agencies, including EPA. For information or a registration form, contact Far West Fertilizer and Agrichemical Association at 509/838-6653, fax 509/838-6685, or email: farwest@ior.com, or visit the conference web site at http://www.wdwtcm.wr.usgs.gov/ccpt/ag_wq_conf98/



Celebrate WaterWeeks!

Join the fun! Celebrate **Washington WaterWeeks**, which takes place this year from August 29 through October 4. This annual five-week long series of events is designed to help Washington residents of all ages understand and take action to protect the state's water resources and shorelines. The goal of WaterWeeks is to get residents involved in fun local activities and connect them with organizations that can help them become year-round stewards. EPA is one of many sponsors of this important program. To request an activity guide that lists events near you, and the accompanying guide *Hands on for Healthy Habitats!*, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4EPA.

For more information on WaterWeeks, visit their web site at www.waterweeks.org or call 360/943-3642.



Enviro Ed Grant Successes Shared

A new resource is now available from EPA. Called **Great Grants: Environmental Education Success Stories of EPA Region 10**, this mini-book showcases the regional projects EPA has funded under the National Environmental Education Act from 1992 through 1995.

It is our hope that the booklet will be used to assist potential grantees in project design, to help reduce duplication of efforts, to give an understanding of the breadth and depth of EPA's regional grant education program, and to provide educators with ideas and inspiration.

The format assists the reader by using consistent topics. For each grant there is a description of the purpose and goals, the education methods used, the results and products of the grant, the challenges faced by project organizers, and success and strengths in educational and environmental terms. The reader may also find the various indexes useful in reviewing specific topics.

If you would like to receive a copy of this publication, please call the Public Environmental Resource Center at 1-800-424-4372. If you have questions about the publication, call Sally Hanft, Region 10's Environmental Education Grant Coordinator, at 206/553-1207 or 1-800-424-4EPA x1207.



Project XL: Cleaner, Cheaper, Smarter

Attention companies, industrial sectors, communities, publicly-owned-treatment works, federal facilities, and others! EPA is calling for more participation in **Project XL**, a pilot program created by President Clinton which stands for eXcellence and Leadership.

Under Project XL, EPA offers flexibility in its regulations, policies, procedures, and guidance, as well as other benefits to encourage development and testing of "cleaner, cheaper, and smarter" ways to protect public health and the environment. Two key conditions for such pilot projects are 1) that they produce better environmental results,

and 2) that they involve representatives of the public in the project.

Projects already underway demonstrate that alternative regulatory strategies can greatly increase environmental protection while producing substantial cost savings, greater operational flexibility, better stakeholder relationships, and the ability to adapt processes and products more quickly to changes in consumer demand. FEDERAL REGISTER notices and other materials are available on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/ProjectXL> and through fax-on-demand at 202/260-8590. Or, call John Palmer, EPA, at 206/553-6521 or 1-800-424-4EPA x6521, email: palmer.john@epamail.epa.gov

Starthistle, Spurge, Ragwort---Weeds!

It seems EPA's collection of documents on safe pesticide use is growing like a weed! Eleven new pamphlets are available as part of EPA's Urban Pesticide Initiative. The documents contain *integrated pest management* (IPM) information to help in the control of noxious weeds in the Northwest. Weeds covered include: yellow and purple starthistle; gorse; tansy ragwort; leafy spurge; spotted, diffuse, and Russian knapweed; Canada thistle; Scotch, French, and Spanish broom; smooth cordgrass (*Spartina, A.*); and purple loosestrife. EPA also has copies of other popular documents such as "Integrated Vegetation Management for Roadsides" and "Integrated Pest Management for Schools: A How-To Manual." For free copies, contact Donald Priest at 206/553-2584, 1-800-424-4EPA x2584, or email: priest.donald@epamail.epa.gov.



Wetlands, Wetlands, Wetlands!

America's Wetlands---A Vital Link

Wetlands---marshes, swamps, bogs, and similar watery places---are natural wonderlands of great value, serving as the vital link between water and land. They are found in nearly every US county, and take many forms and sizes. Wetlands help improve water quality, control flooding, provide critical habitat, and offer recreational activities. Unfortunately, more than half of our wetlands have been destroyed. A new booklet from EPA gives a better understanding of the rich variety of wetlands, their importance, how they are threatened, and what can be done to conserve them for future generations. The booklet is 16 pages and contains full-color photos. To request a free copy of **America's Wetlands: Our Vital Link Between Land and Water**, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4EPA.

Tierras Pantanosas: Wetlands in Spanish!

A poster-sized wetlands brochure---written entirely in Spanish---is now available free from EPA. On one side is a suitable-for-coloring poster showing different types of plants and animals one might find in a wetland, complete with written descriptions. On the other side is detailed information about wetlands, including their types, values, and what individuals can do to help protect them. For copies, call the Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4EPA.

Wetlands Guide for Partnerships

Folks seeking to organize a local partnership to protect their watershed may find a new 8-page document helpful. It's called **Wetlands: A Key Link In Watershed Management, A Guide for Watershed Partnerships**. The guide discusses how wetlands can benefit a watershed, provides information designed to build understanding about wetlands, explores the management and restoration of wetlands, and highlights what can be done on their behalf. The Conservation Technology Information Center developed the guide with support from EPA and others. For a free copy, call EPA's Public Environmental Resource Center at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4EPA.

National Wetlands Information Hotline

Phone: 1-800-832-7828

Email: wetlands-hotline@epamail.epa.gov

Resources On Line!

Beaches and Fish on the Web

A new EPA Internet site is afloat for citizens interested in checking the health and environment of their beaches. Through the site, <http://www.epa.gov/ost/beaches>, citizens can get information on whether their beach is monitored for microbial pollution and on advisories and closings for those beaches. The information is limited to those beaches that responded to EPA's survey. The site currently has information on more than 1,000 beaches and continues to expand as responses are received. A similar website at <http://www.epa.gov/ost/fish/> has been developed to give access to state fish advisories. EPA has also developed a Beach Action Plan and a five-year strategy to develop stronger, faster and more accurate beach monitoring programs for states. The program will strengthen beach water quality standards, improve access to information on beach water quality, and increase research to address health problems related to swimming. These initiatives were key action items in the President's Clean Water Action Plan. For more information about these initiatives, call Curry Jones, EPA, at 206/553-6912 or 1-800-424-4EPA x6912, or email jones.curry@epamail.epa.gov

Water Discussions OnLine

Folks who wish to network with others interested in small community drinking water, wastewater, or environmental training issues may want to check out new online discussion areas. The online resources are intended to be networking tools for local officials, regulators, assistance providers, consultants, engineers, educators, and the public. The computer discussion areas offer an avenue to ask questions, discuss small community environmental issues, learn of additional resources, or just read what others in the water and training fields are talking about. The sites are listed below. For more information call Diana Knott, 1-800-624-8301.

National Small Flows Clearinghouse: small community and onsite wastewater treatment issues, www.nsfc.wvu.edu

National Drinking Water Clearinghouse: small community drinking water issues, www.ndwc.wvu.edu

National Environmental Training Center for Small Communities: environmental training issues, www.netc.wvu.edu

Enviro Funding OnLine

Looking for a way to fund a community-based environmental project? Check out the Community Based Environmental Protection webpage. It summarizes ten competitive grant programs administered by EPA Region 10. Eligible applicants include tribes, communities, and not-for-profit organizations. To access this information, visit Region 10's homepage at <http://www.epa.gov/r10earth/index.htm>. Select "Programs and Offices" from the menu on the left. Under "Office of Ecosystems and Communities," click on "Community Based Environmental Protection (CBEP)." A contact person is listed for each grant program if you have additional questions or would like to request application materials.

Reach EPA Staff Via Email

To reach EPA staff by email, simply use this formula for the address:

lastname.firstname@epamail.epa.gov. For example, the email address for WaterTalk's editor is lindsay.andrea@epamail.epa.gov. Of course, there are exceptions---if you can't get a message through, call 1-800-424-4EPA for assistance.

**Visit EPA With Your Computer
at www.epa.gov/r10earth**

CALENDAR

August

4-7: Cross Currents in Water Policy, Hood River, Oregon. University Council of Water Resources, 540/231-8039.

16-20: Integrated Tools for Natural Resources Inventories in 21st Century, Boise, Idaho. Society of American Foresters, 208/384-6328.

29-October 4: Washington WaterWeeks, annual series of events to involve residents throughout the state in water restoration and education efforts. Marie McNamara, 360/943-3642.

September

11-13: Salmon Homecoming Celebration, Seattle Waterfront, Washington.

1-2: Emergency Planning for Water and Wastewater Utilities, Auburn, Washington. Washington Environmental Training Center, 253/833-9111 x3369, 1-800-562-0858.

9-11: A Time For Hearing, tribal resource protection conference, Olympia, Washington. Skokomish Natural Resources, 360/877-5213, email: dublanik@elwha.evergreen.edu or www.nwlink.com/~mwf/

October

10-11: Salmon Festival, Oxbow Park, Portland, Oregon.

16: Deadline for submissions for the November issue of WaterTalk Newsletter. Andrea Lindsay, EPA Editor, 206/553-1896 or 1-800-424-4EPA x1896.

20-22: Environmental Forum for Business Expo, Spokane, Washington, 509/358-2073.

20-22: Designing & Implementing Habitat Modifications for Salmon and Trout, University of WA. Engineering Professional Programs, 206/543-5539, www.engr.washington.edu/epp/Pepl/peplcal.html

26-28: Pacific Northwest Pollution Control Association Annual Conference, Portland, Oregon, 503/579-1472.

28-30: Ecosystem Restoration: Turning the Tide, Tacoma, Washington. Society for Ecological Restoration Northwest Chapter, 1-800-942-4978.

November

3-4: Tribal Environmental Conference, Seattle, Washington. EPA Region 10, Ruth Siguenza, 553-2143, 1-800-424-4EPA x2143, email: siguenza.ruth@epamail.epa.gov

17-18: Northwest Environmental Conference and Trade Show, Portland, Oregon. Northwest Environmental Business Council, 503/227-6361, <http://www.nebc.or/nwec/conference.html>

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You are invited to contribute items for publication. Submittal deadline is the 15th day of the month preceding publication.

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To contact the **Editor**, call **Andrea Lindsay** at **206/553-1896**,
1-800-424-4EPA x1896, or email: **lindsay.andrea@epamail.epa.gov**.

Accessibility Information: This publication is available in alternate formats (eg, large print, Braille). To request an alternate format, contact EPA at 206/553-1200 or 1-800-424-4EPA. People with hearing or speech impairments can call EPA's telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD) at 206/553-1698.

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