

EPA News Release

September 13, 2004

EPA Approves Pollution Limits for Snake River-Hells Canyon

Contacts:

Christine Psyk
EPA, Region 10
206-553-1906
FAX : 206-553-0165
Psyk.christine@epa.gov
<http://www.epa.gov/region10/>

Marti Bridges
Idaho DEQ
208-373-0382
FAX : 208-373-0576
Mbridges@deq.state.id.us
<http://www.deq.state.id.us/>

Dick Nichols
Oregon DEQ
541-388-6146
FAX : 541-388-8283
Nichols.dick@deq.state.or.us
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/>

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved limits on pollutants in more than two hundred miles of the Snake River, from the Idaho/Oregon border near Adrian, Oregon to the inflow of the Salmon River. This stretch of the Snake does not meet water quality standards for temperature, nutrients, sediments, total dissolved gas, and a number of pesticides. Limits for key pollutants, which call for significant reductions in phosphorus and temperature in areas home to several endangered species, have been defined as *Total Maximum Daily Loads* (TMDLs); many of the reductions will be tied to sediment load reductions at the mouths of tributaries, such as the Boise, Payette, and Weiser Rivers. Meeting the targets set by the TMDLs will require the cooperation of municipalities, utilities, and agricultural concerns. The TMDLs were developed to meet the schedules of both Idaho and Oregon and to run concurrent with the hydropower relicensing efforts of Idaho Power Company.

The Snake River TMDLs are the end product of a joint effort between the states of Idaho and Oregon, with assistance from the EPA. Both states have worked closely with local communities for

EPA Press Release

- 2 -

more than two years to develop pollutant targets: a bi-state public advisory team met monthly from December 2001 through May 2002, and the states held more than forty meetings with the general public, the public advisory team, watershed advisory groups, stakeholders, and other public entities. The states also held concurrent 120-day public comment periods before completing the final draft of the TMDL document and submitting it to EPA in July 2003.

According to Joni Hammond, Eastern Region Administrator for the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), "Completion of the Snake River/Hells Canyon TMDLs is the first step in restoring water quality in the Snake River. Improved water quality will benefit the citizens of both Oregon and Idaho, and the Oregon DEQ looks forward to working with all stakeholders to implement the TMDLs."

Marti Bridges, TMDL Program Manager for the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, added, "The TMDL process was long, tedious, and sometimes contentious. Idaho DEQ looks forward to working with stakeholders throughout this basin in the years to come, effecting water quality improvements that will enhance the natural environment and help maintain the economic vitality of local communities."

EPA's Region 10 office, located in Seattle, worked closely with the states as they developed these TMDLs, said Christine Psyk, EPA's TMDL Program Manager. "The TMDLs need to be implemented. On-the-ground actions that result in reductions of these pollutants entering the water body need to happen next. Permits need to be written that reflect the called for reductions, and people living in communities along this stretch of river will need to cooperate and take the necessary actions to achieve better water quality."

The federal Clean Water Act (CWA) requires that states and tribes restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. Section 303(d) of the CWA establishes requirements for states and tribes to identify and prioritize water bodies that do not meet water quality standards. For waters identified on this list, states and tribes must develop a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the pollutants, set at a level to achieve water quality standards.

#