

Comments on Draft of WRIA 1 Rule Amendment
May 9, 2019

1. The ESSB 6091 bill was titled “AN ACT Relating to ensuring that water is available to support development.” Somewhere the name “Streamflow restoration act” was substituted for that title. The entire Draft plan as proposed by Ecology neither ensures that development can be supported nor restores streamflows. It only attempts to ensure that no more streams will be depleted. This Draft update clearly does not abide by the intent of this law.
2. In Whatcom County, there is no clear connection between groundwater withdrawals for domestic use and streamflow depletion. Therefore there is no data supporting domestic-use groundwater reduction to 500 gallons per day.
3. Since groundwater withdrawals generally happen from below the level of a stream and since most, if not all of that water is replaced to the ground, it’s possible that domestic well use could actually enhance streamflow, particularly in drier months. But since Ecology is not willing to study that possibility, we will never know.
4. The Draft’s reduction to 500 gallons per day is simply meant to end all rural development in Whatcom County. This new limit could easily be bumped up against with a large family that chooses to fill a kiddie pool on a hot day. The Sikh berry farmers already have several large multi-generational homes in Whatcom County. This new limit could be considered discrimination against them and their way of life. Are you TRYING to make criminals out of good citizens?
5. The Draft language is highly confusing - must outdoor watering come from the 500 gallons per day?
6. There’s a USGS model referred to in the supporting document that uses 250 gallons per minute. If a home were drawing 5000 gallons per day, that would be roughly 3.47 gallons per minute, and 72 homes would be required to match this model. If the same home were drawing just 3000 gallons per day, that would be 2.08 gallons per minute, and it would require 120 homes to match that model.

7. If all of Whatcom County were in homes of 2.56 people, each withdrawing 5000 gallons per day, the amount of water drawn from the ground would be equal to about 6% of what flows down the Nooksack on its low-flow day of the year. Cut that by 40% if the limit is 3000 gallons. Since most of that is put back into the ground, is it even possible to measure with ANY accuracy the amount of influence that homes in rural Whatcom County have on stream flow? The truth matters!

8. Why not propose solutions that will actually ensure that there is water for development, agriculture, and industry in Whatcom County, for not just 20 years but for an indefinite period to come? Reservoirs that passively catch water when there is plenty, and release it when fish need it could be constructed near the tops of the 9 basins of the Nooksack.

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