

Joseph Knight

I attended the DOE meeting on amendments to 173-501 WAC in Lynden on April 22, 2019. First, I appreciate the detailed information you provided in the Rule Supporting Document. It is 47 pages of very useful information prepared, obviously, by experts in their fields.

I came to the meeting expecting a formal presentation on the rule-writing process. What I found was a convocation of local citizens, many of whom, probably most of whom, oppose the proposed rules on new exempt wells. If there were a do-over, this is what I would suggest:

Call the meeting to order.

Introduce yourselves, explain why you are required to make these rules, and introduce the experts stationed around the room.

Ask for written input. Encourage people to discuss the issue among themselves, and entertain at least a few questions about the administrative process before turning the meeting over to the floor. Allocate maybe ten minutes for this introduction.

I support the new rules. Please maintain the 500-gallon daily limit. It is a very small step in a very complex ecological problem, but if you compromise on this your authority will be crushed.

Make sure that some of the new wells are metered. If you have no data, you have no science, and you have no enforcement leverage in protecting in-stream flow requirements.

Prepare a plan for revising the old in-stream rules and get ready for the backlash.

In mingling with the crowd and talking to some of the other attendees, this is what I heard:

1. Government regulations take away our freedoms.
2. If you haven't lived in Whatcom County your entire life, you have no business being here, and very specifically I was asked Where were I was born and where did I grow up?
3. Global warming does not exist because scientists disagree with each other about it. (There's a non sequitur.)
4. The glaciers are not receding on Mt. Baker because I can see snow on the mountain all year.
5. Water regulations are a Bellingham plot to limit rural growth.
6. Bellingham people can use all the water they want, so why can't we?
7. 500 gallons a day is an unfair burden and one of these days the government is going to meter our water.

The ecological impact of this new rule on water quality is very small, but do not compromise. It is too weak as it stands. Don't let it become worse.