

Sid Mellema

Rulemaking Lead Sawabini,

Please consider my comment on the proposed Nooksack River watershed permit-exempt well rule. Based on the information below, I believe that the proposed rule unfairly restricts indoor water use by rural households and that the restriction on outdoor water to an area less than that authorized by statute is not only wrong, but also does not promote the rural lifestyle that is the essence of Whatcom County.

The rule restricts indoor water use to 500 gallons per day. While this amount of water might be appropriate for households in urban areas, rural households tend to be larger in terms of residents and require more water for household use. 500 gallons per day is the accepted use of a family of four in an urban setting, but larger rural families leading a rural agricultural lifestyle.

There is also the issue of enforcement. While I certainly do not support metering of permit-exempt wells in the rural areas of the county, it does raise the question of how indoor domestic use will be monitored and, if necessary, enforced when a household exceeds the indoor use limit. Enforcement would be easier for outdoor use, but enforcement of an arbitrary and unrealistic indoor use limit seems to be ineffective.

I also disagree with the artificial restriction on outdoor uses proposed for single connection permit-exempt wells. Rev. Code Wash. § 90.44.050(2019) explicitly allows the use of a permit-exempt well to water one-half acre of noncommercial lawn or garden. Ecology now seeks to limit that use to only 1/12 of an acre through some undisclosed mathematical formula. While the restriction can be understood when more than one household is connected to a permit-exempt well, restrictions on a single connection are unnecessary and unwarranted.

Thank you for considering my comments. I anticipate seeing a rule that better balances the needs of rural households against our desire to efficiently use our water resources. Sid Mellema