

Chris Stearns

Thank-you for taking into consideration future uses of water, whatever they may be inside upstream WRIA's. Many local elected officials, such as Lewis County Commissioners have expressed concerns about the loss of water rights inside their county to bottling interests or other entities purchasing water rights inside their county. Thurston PUD provides water service there and we are aware of their concerns regarding protecting those rights for local use. I use this as an example of one of many large rural counties where concerns about the control of future water use has been raised and is a current local issue of great interest to their residents.

Scarcity of quality fresh water will play a larger role in our state's decisions in how we can best be prepared for the ability to meet our future needs of this resource. We must avoid promoting a speculative frenzy to determine how best to meet this need. We must also seek to find ways to augment groundwater supplies in a proactive manner that can help to meet this resource's growing demand as our state continues to grow faster than the national average (for decades now).

Unfortunately, certain historical land uses have left a legacy of badly impacted surface flows in many sub-basins inside our state. I have previously examined the abandoned mine database found at the Earth Resources Division of our state's Dept. of Natural Resources (WA DNR). The greatest concerns I had were the mining of Mercury and Lead throughout our state. Mercury mining has occurred in Lewis County near the town of Morton with a concentrating facility near Spencer Lake. Also in Whatcom County several mines existed throughout that county and even impacts urban shorelines there today. The largest concentration of mining activity in our state occurred during World War I over 100 years ago mostly in the three Northeast counties of our state (Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille). The principal ores removed then were for Lead and Zinc which were both utilized in the manufacture of munitions at the time. Several old mining districts like the Monte Cristo area (Eastern Snohomish County) were sulfide deposits which when exposed to the above ground surface soon created "Acid Mine Drainage" (AMD) and helped to place many types of heavy metals like arsenic, cadmium etc. in our surface water that wasn't present before in high concentrations. Sulfide deposits are found throughout our state and are associated with Copper, Silver and Gold extraction which continues even today.

Good news is some areas of our state, mostly on USFS lands, have undergone clean-up such as Railroad Creek a tributary of upper Lake Chelan between Holden (an old mining camp) and Lucerne which is on the lakeshore. The forest service has been funding these clean-ups and still has many to do! Several old mining sites were not on federal lands and remain a problem still to be addressed for our state on our private lands. The legacy of mining pollution is a significant factor in the way we must manage our fresh water resources. Looking at the Upper Columbia basin watershed in Northern Stevens County above Lake Roosevelt the legacy of the outfalls of the Canadian Smelters at Rossland and Trail are still apparent today.

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