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The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is proposing to adopt new rules for the Deschutes Watershed (Water Resource Inventory Area 13--WRIA 13) that would allow continued drilling of new permit-exempt wells in the watershed without any requirement for mitigation, metering, or monitoring, and without consideration of impacts on streamflows or other habitat in the Deschutes. Ecology developed these rules without any apparent consultation with organizations and persons who are actively working in the watershed to restore and enhance it.

The Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team (DERT) and the Squaxin Island Tribe provided preliminary comments to Ecology in October objecting to the proposed adoption of these new rules without providing further protection for streamflows. DERT has also objected on the basis that the Deschutes Watershed and Restoration Committee (WREC), convened pursuant to state law to develop a plan to restore and enhance the watershed, overwhelmingly recommended revising the existing instream flow rules--adopted in 1980. The WREC also recommended other ideas for better water resource management. DERT was the environmental representative on the WREC. However, in its latest notice Ecology continues to limit the proposed new rules to simply allowing additional wells, and not addressing the instream flow issues or other recommendations of the WREC.

I am requesting that Ecology consider the recommendations of DERT and its allies. Thank you.