

Esther Kronenberg

I write to strongly object to the new rules for WRIA 13. They do not follow the intent of Senate bill 6091 which set up WRIsAs to mitigate for new permit-exempt wells.

The Department of Ecology is well aware of the serious condition of instream flows and water availability that resulted in the Hirst decision, and the subsequent pushback that resulted in the passage of SB 6091.

The WRIA 13 team's failure to reach an agreement as to how best mitigate for more permit exempt wells resulted in the Department making the rules. The proposed rules do not require mitigation, and do not require even metering or monitoring to determine the impact of new withdrawals of the aquifer.

How can the Department purport to protect our crucial water resources and wildlife while completely abdicating any responsibility for water use and monitoring? These rules bring us back to pre-Hirst decision policies.

It appears that the development interests that blocked adoption of a WRIA 13 plan have achieved their goals. No monitoring or metering or mitigation.

Your scientific sense should be offended by the lack of oversight and lack of monitoring to actually know what the effects of continued withdrawals from the aquifer will have on instream flows and the lives of the wildlife and habitat you are supposed to protect.

It appears the Department is bypassing the good work of the WREC committee that worked for more than a year to establish reasonable strategies to protect water availability in WRIA 13.

I urge you to institute monitoring and metering -to fulfill your mission as scientific experts and to protect the public interest.