

Kittitas Reclamation District (Sara Vickers)

Please see attached comments from Kittitas Reclamation District.



Kittitas Reclamation District

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To: Washington State Department of Ecology

Re: Emergency Drought Relief rule (chapter 173-166 WAC) informal comment period

Kittitas Reclamation District (KRD) would like to provide the following comments regarding Emergency Drought Relief rule (chapter 173-166 WAC):

173-166-040 (3) (a) undue hardship caused by drought impacts:

- What about impacts on cultural and tribal resources?
- What about fire risk? Fires impact fish and wildlife, infrastructure, irrigation and access to water supplies. Drought funding has been used in the past to help with wildfire impacts related to drought.

173-166-040 3(b) evaluating undue hardship

- It does not appear that this section includes input from fisheries or wildlife biologists.

Overall Comments:

Drought declarations should happen earlier in the year. This preliminary rule language does not address this. Often when the drought is declared in April or even later, those experiencing the hardship of drought are already working on solutions. Not having access to drought funds earlier in the year poses a challenge to find effective solutions to protect fish, farms, and municipalities. For example – farming and irrigation decisions are made in February and March. If farmers are going to fallow land, the consumptive water used to fallow land could be leased and used for fish or could be used by other water supply entities.

Programs to help fish could be launched earlier with access to earlier funding as well. Funding made available for fish impacts separate from the emergency drought grants would be very helpful.

Grant funding should also be easier to access, and contracts should be issued immediately. This process must be streamlined and the reporting requirements looked at to make it less cumbersome for small entities that could use the help. They are operating

in an emergency and don't have a lot of time to read lengthy contracts or use yellow book forms. The preliminary rule language doesn't address expedited processing.