

Fact Sheet for Proposed New Conditions

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposes to reissue a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit to discharge pollutants pursuant to the provisions of the Clean Water Act, 33 USC §1251 <u>et seq</u> to:

Federal Aquaculture Facilities and Aquaculture Facilities Located in Indian Country in Washington

Public Comment Start Date:July 18, 2023Public Comment Expiration Date:September 1, 2023

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EPA Re-Proposes to Reissue a NPDES General Permit

EPA proposes to reissue the NPDES General Permit for federal aquaculture facilities in the State of Washington, and aquaculture facilities located in Indian Country, as defined in 18 USC §1151, in the State of Washington. This is the second public comment period on the draft general permit. The first public comment period was open from September 7 through December 22, 2022. EPA is seeking comment on the new conditions that have been added to the draft general permit since the previous comment period. EPA is only seeking comment on the following proposed changes:

- 1. Inclusion of Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP) effluent limits for the White River Hatchery (existing) and the proposed Coal Creek Springs Fish Facility (planned);
- 2. Changes to temperature monitoring requirements for facilities discharging to temperature impaired rivers;
- 3. The frequency and timing of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) monitoring for facilities on the Spokane Reservation;
- 4. Changes to the length and milestones of the Temperature Compliance Schedule for Skookum Creek Hatchery.

This Fact Sheet includes:

- information on public comment, public hearing, and appeal procedures
- technical material supporting the proposed changes to the draft General Permit

State and Tribal § 401 Certification

Since the General Permit covers all Tribal waters in the State, EPA requested Section 401 Certification for the General Permit from all Washington tribes with Treatment as a State (TAS) under the CWA, as well as from the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology).

EPA received the following responses to our request for Section 401 Certifications:

- Ecology transmitted their CWA § 401 certification, with general conditions, to EPA on December 5, 2022.
- Colville Tribes transmitted their CWA § 401 certification, with general conditions, to EPA on December 19, 2022.
- Chehalis Tribes waived their CWA § 401 certification
- Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe transmitted their CWA § 401 certification, without conditions, to EPA on November 4, 2022.
- Kalispel Tribe of Indians waived their CWA § 401 certification
- Lummi Nation transmitted their CWA § 401 certification, with general conditions, to EPA on September 21, 2022.
- Makah Tribe transmitted their CWA § 401 certification, without conditions, to EPA on December 20, 2022.
- Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe waived their CWA § 401 certification
- Puyallup Tribe waived their CWA § 401 certification
- Quinault Indian Nation waived their CWA § 401 certification
- Spokane Tribe of Indians transmitted their CWA § 401 certification, with conditions, to EPA on November 2, 2022.
- Swinomish Indian Tribal Community waived their CWA § 401 certification
- Tulalip Tribes transmitted their CWA § 401 certification, with conditions, to EPA on November 21, 2022.

The 401 certification conditions will be reflected in the General Permit when it is issued as final pursuant to CWA section 401(d); the Response to Comments document will identify the 401 certification conditions and how they were incorporated into the General Permit.

Public Comment

On September 7, 2022, EPA proposed a draft NPDES General Permit for public comment to reauthorize the discharges from Federal Aquaculture Facilities and Aquaculture Facilities Located in Indian Country in Washington (2022 draft GP). The close of the public comment period was extended from November 7, 2022 to December 22, 2022. Comments received during the public comment period can be viewed at https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/npdes-general-permit-federal-aquaculture-facilities

A number of changes have been made to the draft General Permit since the previous comment period as described above. Since these conditions were not included in the initial public comment period, pursuant to 40 CFR 124.14(c), EPA is issuing the modified draft General Permit for a second public comment period focused exclusively on comments related to these conditions, which are described in more detail in this Fact Sheet, and which are reflected in the updated draft General Permit (2023 draft GP). EPA is

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not seeking comment on other effluent limits or provisions in the General Permit, which were already available for public comment in the 2022 draft GP. EPA will consider all comments received during the public comment period from September 7, 2022 to December 22, 2022 and during this comment period prior to reissuing the General Permit

Persons wishing to comment on, or request a Public Hearing for, the draft General Permit may do so in writing by the expiration date of the Public Comment period. A request for a Public Hearing must state the nature of the issues to be raised as well as the requester's name, address and telephone number. All comments and requests for Public Hearings must be in writing and should be submitted to EPA as described below.

By the expiration date of the public comment period, all written comments and requests must be submitted to <u>epar10wd-npdes@epa.gov</u> with the subject line: Public Comments on WAG130000.

After the Public Notice expires, and all comments have been considered, EPA will make a final decision regarding permit reissuance. If no substantive comments are received, the tentative conditions in the draft permit will become final, and the permit will become effective upon reissuance. If substantive comments are received, EPA will address the comments and reissue the permit.

Pursuant to Section 509(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1369(b)(1), any interested person may appeal the General Permit in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals within 120 days following notice of EPA's final decision for the General Permit.

Documents are Available for Review

The draft NPDES permit, fact sheet and other information can be downloaded from the internet at <u>https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/npdes-general-permit-federal-aquaculturefacilities-and-aquaculture-facilities-located</u>

The draft NPDES permit, fact sheet and related documents are also available electronically upon request by contacting Martin Merz.

For technical questions regarding the permit or fact sheet, contact Martin Merz at the 206-553-0205 or <u>merz.martin@epa.gov</u>. Services can be made available to persons with disabilities by contacting Audrey Washington at (206) 553-0523.

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I. Introduction

This fact sheet provides information on proposed changes to the draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Federal Aquaculture Facilities and Aquaculture Facilities Located in Indian Country within the Boundaries of Washington State.

The Fact Sheet, dated September 7, 2022, provides general information on the facilities, information on the receiving water, applicable water quality standards, permit history, tribal consultation, geographic area, facility operations and types of discharges, pollutants associated with facilities, treatment, compliance history, and proposed final effluent limits and permit conditions.

The September 2022 draft General Permit and associated Fact Sheet did not include:

- 1. Inclusion of Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP) effluent limits for the White River Hatchery (existing) and the proposed Coal Creek Springs Fish Facility (planned);
- 2. Changes to temperature monitoring requirements for facilities discharging to temperature impaired rivers;
- 3. The frequency and timing of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) monitoring for facilities on the Spokane Reservation;
- 4. Changes to the length and milestones of the Temperature Compliance Schedule for Skookum Creek Hatchery.

EPA has revised the draft General Permit to include these items. The following sections in this Fact Sheet provide the basis for these proposed new conditions for which EPA is seeking public comment.

II. Changes to the General Permit for which EPA is Accepting Public Comment

A. Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP) Wasteload Allocations (WLAs)

Section 303(d) of the CWA requires states to identify specific water bodies where water quality standards are not expected to be met after implementation of technology-based effluent limitations by point sources. For all 303(d)-listed water bodies and pollutants, states must develop and adopt TMDLs that will specify WLAs for point sources and load allocations (LAs) for non-point sources, as appropriate. WLAs for point sources are implemented through limitations incorporated into NPDES permits that are consistent with the assumptions of the WLAs in the TMDL (40 CFR 122.44(d)(1)(vii)(B)).

The Fact Sheet associated with the 2022 draft GP describes impairments for pollutants of concern in receiving waters in Washington, and associated TMDLs and WLAs applicable to facilities covered under this General Permit. At the time, there was only one facility, the Skookum Creek Hatchery, covered by this General Permit that had an effluent limitation derived from a TMDL WLA. After the first public comment period closed, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) issued the Lower White River pH TMDL. EPA approved the TMDL in January 2023. The TMDL was developed to cover both Washington and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (MIT) jurisdictions. However, since Ecology does not have authority within MIT waters, facilities located within MIT waters have not been given a WLA in the TMDL. Instead, these facilities have been allocated a portion of the 'MIT Reservation Capacity', or a 'Reserve Load' which is accounted for in the overall TMDL analysis. Accordingly, a planned facility – the Coal Creek Springs Fish Facility – that will discharge to MIT waters, has been allocated a specific portion of the MIT Reservation Capacity in the

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TMDL; referred to in the TMDL as the "Reserve Load." The "Reserve Load" for the facility is implemented in this General Permit as an effluent limitation consistent with the assumptions of the TMDL. In addition, there is a WLA for the White River Hatchery in the TMDL, which is also applied as an effluent limitation in the General Permit.

The White River pH TMDL analysis states that increased periphyton growth caused by excessive phosphorous inputs is the primary cause of pH exceedances within the TMDL boundary. Periphyton are a group of organisms, which grow or accumulate on the bottom of a stream, that consists of algae, bacteria, and other microscopic life. Accordingly, although the TMDL is aimed at addressing pH impairments, the TMDL sets SRP WLAs and Reserve Loads in order to limit periphyton growth and meet the numeric water quality criteria for pH in the White River. The WLAs and Reserve Loads for the two facilities are provided on page 36 (Table 8) in the Lower White River pH TMDL; an excerpt of that TMDL is replicated in Appendix A of this Fact Sheet Addendum.

EPA developed SRP effluent limitations consistent with the assumptions of the WLA and Reserve Load in the TMDL (40 CFR 122.44(d)(1)(vii)(B)). These are presented below in Tables 1 and 2 and in the revised General Permit (Permit Tables 6 and 7). As illustrated in the Tables, the TMDL-based limits are a function of flow tiers as follows:

- Tier 1 High Flow: daily average White River flow exceeds 2,000 cfs
- Tier 2 Medium Flow: daily average White River flow is between 900 cfs and 2,000 cfs
- Tier 3 Low Flow: daily average White River flow is less than 900 cfs

For both hatchery facilities, the limits do not apply outside of the May 1 - October 31 critical period, or when the daily average river flow exceeds 2,000 cfs (High Flow; Tier 1).

Table 1 - Effluent Limitations and Monitoring Requirements for White River Hatchery							
Parameter	Units	Timeframe	Daily Average White	Effluent Limitations	Monitoring Requirements		
			River Flow ¹	Seasonal Average	Sample Frequency	Sample Type	Sample Location
Net ² Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP)	Net lbs / day	November 1 – April 30			No Monitoring Required		
Net ² Soluble	ve day horus	/ May 1 – June 30	<900 cfs ¹	2.43	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent
Reactive Phosphorus			900-2000 cfs ¹	2.43	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent
(SRP)			>2000 cfs ¹		No Monitoring Required		
Net ² Soluble	Soluble Net lbs /	s / July 1 – October 31	<900 cfs ¹	0.94	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent
Reactive Phosphorus	day		900-2000 cfs ¹	2.43	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent
(SRP)			>2000 cfs1		No Monitoring Required		

1 - Daily average White River flows must be obtained from the White River at USGS gage 12100490 WHITE RIVER AT R STREET NEAR AUBURN, WA. 2 - The influent SRP value may be derived from both groundwater and surface water sources.

Parameter	Units	Timeframe	Daily Average White	Effluent Limitations	Monitoring Requirements			
			River Flow ¹	Seasonal Average	Sample Frequency	Sample Type	Sample Location	
Net ² Soluble Reactive Phosphorus (SRP)	Net lbs / day	November 1 – April 30			No Monitoring Required			
Net ² Soluble	e Net lbs / day	2	<900 cfs ¹	0.99	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent	
Reactive Phosphorus			900-2000 cfs ¹	0.99	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent	
(SRP)			>2000 cfs ¹		No Monitoring Required			
Net ² Soluble	e Net lbs /	5	<900 cfs ¹	0.86	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent	
Reactive Phosphorus	day	ay October 31	900-2000 cfs ¹	0.99	Weekly	Measurement	Influent ² & Effluent	
(SRP)			>2000 cf	>2000 cfs1		No Monitoring Required		

Daily average White River flows must be obtained from the White River at USGS gage 12100490 WHITE RIVER AT R STREET NEAR AUBURN, WA.
 The influent SRP value may be derived from both groundwater and surface water sources.

After the TMDL critical period (May 1 – October 31) each year, the permittee must calculate the seasonal arithmetic mean SRP net load associated with each effluent limit set forth in Tables 1 and 2 above (Permit Tables 6 and 7) for all SRP samples between May 1st and October 31st. As described in Permit Part VIII.D., additional sampling is permitted beyond what is required, but the additional samples must be included in the calculations and reporting of data. The seasonal arithmetic mean must be calculated using only one value for each week. If multiple samples are taken in a week, the average of the samples taken during that week will be used to calculate the seasonal arithmetic mean. For compliance purposes, the permittee will enter the arithmetic mean associated with each effluent limit into NetDMR by January 20 each year.

The permittee must also submit an SRP Data Report to EPA by January 20 each year. The SRP Data Report must include the receiving water flow associated with each SRP sample. The Permittee must submit the file as an electronic attachment to NetDMR in accordance with Permit Part VIII.B.1 (even if the Permittee is a Non-CAAP facility). The file name of the electronic attachment must be as follows: YYYY_MM_DD_WAG1300##_SRP_43599, where YYYY_MM_DD is the date that the Permittee submits the file and ## is the Permittee's unique identifier under the general permit.

B. Updated Temperature Monitoring Requirements for Facilities Discharging to Temperature Impaired Waters

During the previous permit term (2016-2021), EPA required two years of continuous effluent and upstream receiving water temperature monitoring for all facilities that discharge to receiving waters impaired for temperature. The purpose of this monitoring was to ensure that the Permittees were collecting adequate data to assess if there is reasonable potential for the facility effluent to cause or contribute to exceedances of temperature water quality standards. The draft General Permit (September 2022 draft GP) proposed continuation of the same temperature monitoring requirement for all facilities that discharge to waters impaired for temperature, except that monitoring would not be required for any facility that already collected two years of continuous temperature data that showed that the effluent does not have reasonable potential to cause or contribute to an exceedance of temperature water quality standards in the receiving water.

EPA is proposing to revise this monitoring requirement in three ways:

1. Upon further consideration, EPA proposes to require temperature monitoring from all facilities that discharge to temperature impaired waters, <u>including those that previously</u> <u>collected data showing no reasonable potential to contribute to an exceedance of temperature water quality standards</u>.

This will impact two facilities:

- a) Quilcene National Fish Hatchery U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- b) House of Salmon Lower Elwha Fish Hatchery Lower Elwha S'Klallam Tribe

The reason for this reconsideration is twofold. First, for a dynamic parameter such as temperature, in an industry that can have varying impacts on temperature between facilities based on operations, and within a given facility based on year-to-year

operations, it is important to have assurance on an ongoing basis that a facility is not causing or contributing to water quality standard exceedances for temperature. When the permit is reissued, these more recent effluent data will allow the permit writer to ensure that the temperature in the effluent continues to fall below the temperature water quality standards. Second, if a waterbody is impaired for temperature, a TMDL must be developed for that waterbody. As such, the temperature monitoring data will assist in the development of WLAs in a TMDL.

- 2. For facilities discharging to the Columbia River, which has a temperature TMDL focused on the critical period of June 1 October 30, EPA has clarified that temperature monitoring will only be required during this summer critical period regardless of whether monitoring is grab or continuous. This is consistent with the assumptions of the TMDL.
- 3. For all facilities requiring temperature monitoring under this permit (except for Skookum Creek Hatchery), the permittee will be given two options with regard to temperature monitoring. The permittee may either:
 - a) Conduct continuous temperature monitoring for two (not necessarily consecutive) years as already specified in the permit (existing monitoring option); or
 - b) Collect temperature grab samples twice per week, in the afternoon between 3-5pm, for 4 years of the permit term (new monitoring option).

This alternative monitoring option is based on EPA's recognition that, for some small facilities, paying for and operating continuous temperature monitoring gauges could be overly burdensome. EPA has also concluded that twice weekly grab samples, over a longer period of time, will still suffice for assessing reasonable potential for the facility to cause or contribute to temperature exceedances. For these reasons, EPA is proposing this less costly, and for some, less burdensome monitoring option. Aside from Skookum Creek Hatchery, which has a temperature effluent limit based on a TMDL WLA, all facilities will be able to choose which monitoring option they utilize. Grab sample monitoring must begin within 90 days of the General Permit effective date. As is the case with the continuous monitoring option, if a facility has more than one outfall, the Permittee must perform temperature monitoring on the outfall that is most representative of the facility's flow.

To reflect these three temperature monitoring changes, EPA amended language in Permit Part V.A (Table 1), Part V.B. (Table 6), and Part V.C.1.

C. PCB Monitoring for Facilities within the Spokane Reservation

The Spokane Tribe of Indians 401 certification included the following condition:

"The permittee shall monitor their effluent for PCB congeners and report its findings to the Spokane Tribe, WCB."

Based on this CWA 401 certification condition from the Spokane Tribe of Indians, EPA will be requiring PCB monitoring from all facilities on the Spokane Reservation. Currently, this would apply to Ford State Fish Hatchery and the Spokane Tribal Fish Hatchery. If any

additional facility located on the Spokane Reservation obtains coverage under the permit during the permit term, the facility would be required to conduct PCB monitoring.

EPA is not required to accept comments on a permit condition that is included as a result of a 401 certification condition. However, since this certification condition requires EPA to identify the frequency, timing and reporting of the PCB monitoring, and since EPA is already conducting an additional comment period on the permit, EPA will accept comments on the frequency, timing and reporting related to the PCB monitoring. EPA is not accepting comment on whether PCB monitoring should be required, since it is a condition of the Spokane Tribe's 401 certification and therefore EPA is required to include the monitoring condition pursuant to CWA section 401(d).

EPA is specifying that monitoring must take place annually, during the calendar month of maximum feeding. In addition, since the 401 certification condition requires monitoring of PCB congeners, EPA is proposing to require that the permittees use Method 1668C, which is effective at measuring PCB congeners. Reporting of PCB monitoring results to EPA and the Spokane Tribe of Indians will be required once per year on or before January 20th (see Part V.C.3.). If a facility has more than one outfall, the Permittee must perform PCB monitoring at the outfall that is most representative of the facility's discharge.

As reflected in language added to Appendix A: Minimum Levels, EPA is requiring permittees to report the total concentration of PCB congeners in their annual submittal of PCB data. Additionally, a complete congener analysis must also be submitted as an attachment to the DMR. For any analysis of PCB congeners using EPA Method 1668, the permittee must target minimum detection levels (MDLs) no greater than the MDLs listed in Table 2 of EPA Method 1668 Revision C (EPA-820-R-10-005) and must analyze for each of the 209 individual congeners. Permittees must follow the Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) with respect to data validation and blank censoring. The Task Force QAPP addresses this issue in Section 4.2.2, on Pages 40 and 41. Analytes found in samples at concentrations less than 5 times the associated blank concentration will be flagged with a "B" qualifier. The Task Force QAPP states that "all qualified data will be reported with validation qualifiers, however B flagged data will not be used in congener summations for total PCB" (Page 41). See http://srttf.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/QAPP_FINAL_081114.pdf.

This annual effluent monitoring will provide valuable information for the development of a PCB TMDL in the Spokane River Watershed. This monitoring, added due to the Spokane Tribes 401 certification, also partially addresses PCB-related concerns raised in comments received during the first public comment period on the 2022 draft GP, which call for PCB monitoring to characterize the effluent from hatchery facilities.

To reflect the addition of PCB monitoring, the General Permit language has been amended in Permit Part V.A (Table 1), Part V.B. (Table 8), Part V.C.3, and appendix A: Minimum Levels.

D. Adjustment of the Temperature Compliance Schedule Length and Milestones for Skookum Creek Hatchery

In coordination with the Lummi Nation, EPA has adjusted the overall length and interim milestones of the temperature compliance schedule for Skookum Creek Hatchery. There are a number of approaches to reducing effluent temperatures for Lummi Nation to evaluate, and a number of potential funding sources to navigate, which will require additional time.

Additionally, the permittee has other new monitoring requirements so this additional time will allow them to navigate these multiple new compliance responsibilities concurrently while still meeting the effluent limit as soon as possible. EPA also adjusted the submittal date from December 31 to January 20 to align with NetDMR submittal dates. EPA has adjusted the compliance schedule as follows (see bold):

	Table 3 – Tasks Required Under the Temperature Schedule of Compliance					
Task No.	Due at End of Year	Task Activity				
1	⊺wo Four	No later than January 20 , YEAR: complete an alternatives evaluation of methods the Permittee may use to achieve the final effluent limits in Table 10. The alternatives evaluation should consider facility improvements, shading, re-use of effluent, and possible trading mechanisms such as offsite mitigation, including wetland and habitat restoration. Starting in 2022 and continuing through 2024, the Permittee must include an attachment to its Annual Report to EPA that details the evaluation of each available option.				
2	Four Six	No later than January 20 , YEAR: provide a preliminary schedule of design upgrades and/or a preliminary construction schedule that will be used to achieve compliance with the final limits. By December 31 of each year thereafter, the Permittee must include information in its Annual Report to EPA which details the progress made toward achieving the final effluent limitations, and the series of actions that will be taken in the coming year.				
3	Ten Twelve	No later than 12 years from the effective date of the permit: the Permittee must be in compliance with the final effluent limits for temperature. The Permittee must notify EPA in writing when the final effluent limits are achieved.				

III. Appendix A. WLA and Reserve Load from the White River pH TMDL

Permittee	WLA or Reserve	Unit	Pollutant	Flow Tier and Period for WLA or Reserve	Additional Information
MIT White River Fish Hatchery WLA (WAG130000)	0.94	Net Ibs /day	SRP	< 900 cfs: July 1- October 31	see footnote*
MIT Coal Creek Springs Fish Facility Reserve	0.86	Net Ibs /day	SRP	< 900 cfs: July 1- October 31	see footnote*
MIT White River Fish Hatchery WLA (WAG130000)	2.43	Net Ibs /day	SRP	<2000 cfs: May 1 – June 30 & 900 – 2000 cfs: July 1 - October 31	see footnote*
MIT Coal Creek Springs Fish Facility Reserve	0.99	Net Ibs /day	SRP	<2000 cfs: May 1 – June 30 & 900 – 2000 cfs: July 1 - October 31	see footnote*

* WLA or reserve applies during entire critical period

SRP = Soluble Reactive Phosphorus

Other Load Limits and Requirements:

- Daily average river flows must be obtained for the White River at USGS gage 12100490 WHITE RIVER AT R STREET NEAR AUBURN, WA.
- SRP loads for a given day will be categorized in a high, medium, or low flow tier based on the daily average flow.
- SRP loads will be expressed as seasonal limits in facilities' respective permits. In November
 of each year, the arithmetic mean SRP load must be calculated for each flow tier based on
 assigned classification (described above) for all SRP samples between May 1st and October
 31st.
- Only the loadings associated with the medium flow tier shall apply in the months of May and June, even if the flow is less than 900 cfs. Any river flows below 900 cfs in these months would be below the historical 7Q10 low flow (950 cfs) for these months. When river flow is less than 2,000 cfs in May and June, hatchery SRP loads will only be assigned to the medium flow tier.
- Permits for both the White River Hatchery and the Coal Creek Springs (CCS) Fish Facility will be net loads. The loads represent how much SRP can be added to the influent concentration of the facility and not how much total SRP is in the effluent of the facility. The influent may be derived from both groundwater and surface water sources.