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STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY Publication # 01-10-025 amendment

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December 4, 2003

Mr. Randall Smith, Director  
US EPA, Office of Water  
1200 Sixth Avenue, OW-135  
Seattle, WA 98101

**RE: Letter of revision for Grays Harbor/Chehalis Watershed Fecal Coliform Bacteria TMDL, December, 2002**

Dear Mr. Smith:

By this letter Ecology is revising the *Grays Harbor/Chehalis Watershed Fecal Coliform Bacteria TMDL Submittal Report, December 2002*. The revision changes the wasteload allocation (WLA) established for the Weyerhaeuser Cosmopolis pulp mill outfall #1 and fits within the loading capacity of the approved TMDL. No other WLA's or load allocations (LA) will be affected by this change for the Weyerhaeuser facility.

The rationale for this change was established within a recently completed NPDES permit revision for the facility. The higher bacteria limits and WLA for the facility are based upon an application of improved science and studies showing that bacterial fate and transport from the facility are much different than previously understood. Ecology has evaluated the proposed higher bacteria limits and has determined that they are consistent with the loading capacity of the TMDL.

Ecology conducted a formal public review process for the proposed WLA revision simultaneously with the NPDES permit review process. The joint process was completed according to an understanding with staff in the Watershed Recovery Unit in your office. Watershed Recovery Unit staff also requested that additional information be provided regarding the assumptions used to determine the new bacteria WLA. We have enclosed the final fact sheet for the permit and WLA and are providing the following information in response to this request:

- The approved WLA is the same as the previous NPDES permit limit: A monthly geometric mean of 5,000 cfu/100ml. fecal coliform bacteria, with a maximum daily discharge limit of 20,000 cfu/100ml.
- The revised WLA is 42,000 cfu/100ml. monthly geometric mean, with no more than 10% of samples to exceed 128,000 cfu/100ml. each month. The TMDL target is to limit cumulative bacteria loading from all point and non-point sources so that water quality standards are met in the tributaries and Grays Harbor. The targets are: Class A Fresh water, 100 cfu with no more than 10% exceeding 200 cfu; Class B Fresh water, 200 cfu

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with no more than 10% to exceed 400 cfu.; Class A Marine, 14 cfu with no more than 10% exceeding 43 cfu; Class B Marine, 100 cfu with no more than 10% to exceed 200 cfu. The pulp mill WLA is affected by the state water quality standards.

- The calculations and methods used to determine the length of the mixing zone that will provide attainment of the Class B marine standards at the mixing zone edge are described in pages 17 to 24 of the permit fact sheet (enclosed).
- The proposed WLA revision fits within the loading capacity of the Grays Harbor TMDL.
- The higher WLA is supported by science showing it is protective of water quality. The water quality outcomes provided by the existing TMDL would be met at the edge of the mixing zone allowed in the revised permit.
  - The TMDL study found that the Weyerhaeuser Cosmopolis facility contributed less than 4% of the total bacteria loading to the harbor. The remaining 96% of the total bacteria load to the harbor is from non-point sources. The focus of cleanup strategies and overall implementation measures should be largely unaffected by a change to the Weyerhaeuser WLA.
  - The TMDL study found that LA's for non-point sources were mostly limited by needing to meet state fresh water quality standards. The only areas where the LA's were limited by needing to meet marine water quality standards in Grays Harbor were the Humpstulips River, Elk River, and Andrews Creek. These three exceptions were localized in regions of Grays Harbor that are a large distance from the Weyerhaeuser's facility and will not be influenced by the changes in the proposed permit because of rapid die-off rates of bacteria from the distant source.
  - The modified WLA would only increase loading to the mixing zone around the facility.
- As you are aware, issuing this permit does not indicate the last word on Weyerhaeuser's discharge. Ecology permit managers in our Solid Waste Program's Industrial Section will continue to monitor and review monthly discharge data while this permit is in force. If monitoring data or other information indicates that the Cosmopolis facility's discharge exceeds its wasteload allocation, Ecology can require Weyerhaeuser to take action. Additional requirements can be considered in a new permit or in an order or a permit modification issued prior to permit renewal.

I hope you will accept our rationale for revising the Grays Harbor/Chehalis Watershed Fecal Coliform Bacteria TMDL, December, 2002 and approve this action. Your concurrence of this revision will provide certainty that the permit limits and WLA will be consistent.

Sincerely,



Richard K. Wallace, Manager  
Water Quality Program

cc: Kelly Susewind, Ecology  
David Rountry, Ecology  
Ron McBride, Ecology