

Northwest Alloys

Opportunity to Comment

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) invites you to comment on proposed Administrative Order No. 7724. The order allows Northwest Alloys (NWA) to use commingled wastewater to irrigate alfalfa fields on their property during the 2010 growing season. Commingled wastewater includes:

- Storm water
- Groundwater from an onsite well
- Treated sanitary wastewater
- Neutralized water from a former slag pond

Potable water is sometimes added to the commingled wastewater to meet crop water demands. The order does not allow land application of process wastewater from Pond 3.

The proposed order requires NWA to:

- Apply the commingled wastewater in accordance with best management practices and setbacks established to protect surface waters and public exposure.
- Conduct and report monthly monitoring of wastewater and quarterly monitoring of groundwater wells onsite.

The wastewater is very dilute and low in nutrients, salts, and organics. We determined using this water for irrigation purposes will not have a negative effect on surface water, soils, or shallow groundwater if best management practices are followed.

Ecology is currently writing a State Waste Discharge Permit to allow NWA to land apply commingled wastewater. However, the permit will not be completed and the public notified before the 2010 growing season begins. The proposed order allows NWA to land apply the wastewater while the general permit is written.

DATES AND LOCATIONS

Comment period

May 26 to June 28, 2010

Read the proposed order at these locations:

Colville Public Library
195 South Oak Street
Colville, WA 99114

WA Department of Ecology
Industrial Section
300 Desmond Way SE
Lacey, WA 98503

To request a copy of the proposed order or provide comment, contact:

Paul Skyllingstad
Department of Ecology
Industrial Section
P.O. Box 47706
Olympia, WA 98504-7706
psky461@ecy.wa.gov
(360) 407-6949

Special accommodations

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired, call the Waste 2 Resources Program at 360-407-6900.

Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call 877-833-6341.

Site Background

NWA operated a magnesium mining and refining facility in Addy, Washington, between 1976 and 2001. In 2001, the smelter was temporarily shut down. Since then, the company has completed mine closure and reclamation requirements. NWA is working to sell the facility as an industrial site. Current staff consists of security and environmental personnel.

When the plant shut down, process wastewater was stored in Pond 3. Pond 3 water is stored and managed separately from the commingled wastewater. NWA collects commingled wastewater in separate locations onsite.

Permit History

In September 2003, Ecology issued NWA a permit allowing land-application of:

- Commingled wastewater for crop irrigation on company-owned property.
- Process wastewater from Pond 3 once a year as a soil amendment.

In March 2008, NWA submitted an application to renew their permit. In reviewing NWA's permit application, Ecology conducted an extensive review of agronomic, soil, and groundwater data. In April 2009, Ecology recommended that NWA submit separate permit applications for the two wastewater streams. We also requested that NWA temporarily discontinue land application of both wastewater streams until new permits were issued.

NWA submitted separate permit applications in the summer of 2009. In September 2009, Ecology reviewed the commingled wastewater application and sent comments to NWA, requiring the installation of additional groundwater wells and further evaluation of the land treatment system. The new groundwater wells were installed in the fall of 2009.

NWA requested a special allowance to irrigate fields in October and early November 2009 due to its limited capacity to store commingled wastewater onsite. The onsite ponds were full and NWA expected an additional 30-million gallons of precipitation during the fall through spring 2009-2010. Ecology found potential for environmental harm if the ponds overflowed. We issued Order No. 7147 in October 2009 to allow limited land application of commingled wastewater to reduce water volumes onsite.

Pond 3 water

Ecology reviewed NWA's permit application to land apply process wastewater from Pond 3. In March 2010, we sent a letter to NWA identifying a number of concerns about continuing this activity and asked them to explore alternative uses of the wastewater. NWA is currently preparing a response to our letter. Ecology's proposed decision on the land application of Pond 3 wastewater will be advertised in local newspapers and the public will be invited to comment.