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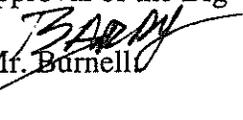
Department of Environmental Quality
State Water Quality Division

Reply To: OWW-134

JUL 01 2008

Barry Burnell, Administrator
Water Quality Division
Department of Environmental Quality
1410 North Hilton
Boise, ID 83706-1255

Re: Approval of the Big Willow Creek Temperature TMDLs

Dear Mr.  Burnell

Following our review and evaluation of the Big Willow Creek Temperature TMDLs by Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is pleased to approve the TMDLs for the waters listed in the table below. These TMDLs were submitted to the EPA on June 13, 2008.

Table of Approved TMDLs

<i>Name of Creek/Water Segment</i>	<i>Assessment Unit #</i>	<i>Pollutant</i>
Big Willow Creek	ID17050122SW017_02	Temperature
Big Willow Creek	ID17050122SW017_04	Temperature
Big Willow Creek	ID17050122SW017_06	Temperature

A TMDL was also completed for Big Willow Creek, Assessment Unit # ID17050122SW017_03 which was not meeting water quality standard for temperature, but had not previously been included on 2002 Idaho's 303(d) List (List) for temperature. EPA understands that this water would have been included on the List had the State been aware of the exceedances at the time the List was completed.

This approval includes all load allocations established in the TMDL, since all of these allocations are required to attain applicable water quality criteria throughout the watershed. Our review indicates that these allocations have been established at a level that, when fully implemented, will lead to the attainment of the water quality criteria addressed by these TMDLs. Therefore the IDEQ does not need to include Big Willow Creek on the next 303(d) list of impaired waters for temperature. The TMDL recommended that until the subbasin sediment and bacteria assessment has been completed, Big Willow Creek should remain on the Section 5 list for "unknown" impairments.

This submittal also includes implementation strategies for the TMDLs. IDEQ developed and submitted these strategies pursuant to the TMDL Settlement Agreement of July 2002. EPA has no duty to approve or disapprove implementation strategies under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act (CWA); therefore, EPA is not taking action on these strategies.

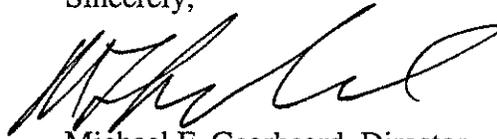
Implementation is the critical next step to realize improvements in water quality, and we encourage IDEQ to continue their work with responsible parties on implementation of these strategies.

EPA believes the Potential Natural Vegetation methodology used to develop these TMDLs provides an excellent foundation for the temperature work being done in the watershed. We also look forward to the refinement of this methodology in order to establish targets which are more specific to the watershed at the five- year review stage.

EPA appreciates the cooperation and hard work of IDEQ staff Susan Beattie and Mike Ingham. Mike coordinated with EPA prior to the public comment period and shared a pre-public comment draft of the TMDL with EPA staff. Susan revised the TMDL after the public comment period and skillfully guided this TMDL to completion. We support this early involvement and believe it results in a better understanding of the approaches used to develop the TMDL, and enables meaningful discussion to occur between IDEQ and EPA staff that can later expedite EPA's review of the final TMDL document.

By EPA's approval, these TMDLs are now incorporated into the State's Water Quality Management Plan under §303(e) of the CWA. Please feel free to call me at (206) 553-7151 if you have any comments or questions, or you may call Donna Walsh of my staff at (206) 334-8412.

Sincerely,



Michael F. Gearheard, Director
Office of Water and Watersheds

cc: Mike McIntyre, Surface Water Program Manager, IDEQ
Marti Bridges, TMDL Program Manager, IDEQ
Craig Shepard, Water Quality Manager, Boise Regional Office, IDEQ
Susan Beattie, Boise Regional Office, IDEQ
Doug Conde, Attorney General, Idaho
Laird Lucas, Advocates for the West
Kristen Boyles, Earthjustice