



Cowlitz Indian Tribe

1055 9th Avenue, Suite C
Longview, WA 98632

Brent Foster, Executive Director
Columbia Riverkeeper

Dvija Michael Bertish, Chairman
Rosemere Neighborhood Association

December 29th 2005

RE: Sole Source Aquifer petition to the EPA for the Troutdale and Unconsolidated Alluvium Aquifer System

Gentlemen,

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe has lived on the landscape of Southwest Washington since time before memory. Archaeological inquiries confirm the rivers, prairies and Cascade Mountain foothills of Clark County were occupied for 9,000 and possibly 11,000 years. This has been our home for at least 450 generations. Although our people were severely affected by Euroamerican diseases, we persist. In 2005 – as has been the case for thousands of years – we continue to reside in a rich and abundant landscape of natural resources. Modern cities and development are draped over the cultural footprints of the Cowlitz Indians. This bountiful landscape was not a wilderness tamed by westerners; it was our garden.

According to a petition recently submitted to the EPA which requests sole-source aquifer (SSA) designation for the Troutdale and Unconsolidated Alluvium Aquifer System (TUAAS), over **99.4%** of the potable water currently delivered by water purveyors in Clark County is derived from groundwater sources. A wide range of factors may affect this aquifer system, including over-allocation, the aquifer's vulnerability to contamination, the loss of recharge and the lack of comprehensive scientific understanding of how the aquifer system behaves.

Water issues and water rights are extremely important for human health and sanitation. As population increases, demand for water increases. High-volume industrial demand of water rises as businesses and manufacturing establish in the region. Moreover, the development of large amounts of impermeable surfaces, including roofs, roads and parking lots, means groundwater sources are not recharged by rainfall. Rather, that water is redirected into gutters and storm sewers, where it rapidly runs off the landscape, creating flashier river systems and higher flood peaks during the wet season. During the dry season, groundwater withdrawal now causes streams, springs and seeps to simply dry up and stop running. These consequences erode the integrity of our waterways and cause declines in the abundances of species which rely on stable water regimes, including juveniles of listed Columbia River salmonid stocks.

Furthermore, these ecologic consequences are already evident with a current population of only 300,000 individuals living within the service area of the proposed TUAAS SSA. Population growth estimates for 2024, less than 20 years and only one generation into the future, forecast an additional 240,000 people residing in the service area of the aquifer, essentially living on top of their water supply.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe believes this groundwater resource should be protected. We support the efforts of the petitioner to designate the Troutdale and Unconsolidated Alluvium Aquifer System as a sole-source aquifer.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Iyall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Iyall, Director
Natural Resources Department
Cowlitz Indian Tribe