

LINCOLN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MINUTES

Lincoln County Commissioners Special Meeting- Hydropower Plant Dye Testing April 4, 2018

Present: Cresley McConnell, Chairman; Rebecca Wood, Commissioner; Roy Hubert, Commissioner; Brenda Farnworth, Clerk for minutes.

Panel; Ed Hagan, DEQ; Gary Wills, patron; Ken Neeley, Department of Water Resources; David Stephenson, Big Wood Canal Co.; Brian Okey, Department of Agriculture; Deputy Scott Livesley, Department of Agriculture; Dale Hellwinkle, Hydropower plant; Ellis Gooch, Big Wood Canal Co; Rick Ellis, patron.

10:00am Chairman McConnell called the meeting to order.

Brian Okey noted that the goal of this meeting is to identify problems with ground water quality due to canal seepage, if any. This is the 2nd meeting to organize efforts. Looking for answers to public questions.

No dye test has been completed at this time. Dye test was requested 2 different times, but had to be done during a certain window and just didn't get done.

Mr. Gooch discussed the issues with his wells last year and the poor quality of the water. He still will not drink water from his wells. Previously had 8 years of positive well testing in that area. Clay Crawford was still having issues after everyone thought that all was cleared up in his wells.

Canal company has been working at filling holes around the hydropower plant with shot crete since the last irrigation season, trying to fill all holes identified.

Discussion on normal ditch loss prior to the hydropower plant compared to now. Canal has also been treated to reduce friction loss of water. The canal company feels that the problem is fixed. Definitely will be less loss due to the fixes done after the last irrigation season.

Discussion on a few areas that are still being watched for erosion and holes.

Discussion on coliform counts in water tests. Total coliform is not the problem. Tests must identify e-coli or fecal present, they are the concerns.

The Department of Water Resources has wells that are tested periodically. Need to do a comparison of test data, last year to this year. Mr. Gooch noted that the state periodically tests the wells on his property. There are also state wells, Lynn Harmon would know the location of those wells. The lower Snake River Aquifer Recharge site has a test well also.

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Commissioner Hubert asked who signed off on the hydro-plant project? Information that he was able to get it that all hydropower plants have to be approved by the Federal Energy Regularity Commission (FERC). According to the contact he visited with at FERC, they had a file on the plant in Lincoln County, but it was never given final approval.

Discussion and questions if proper engineering was done. Ted Sorensen, the owner of the hydropower plant, is an engineer.

Commissioner Wood asked if they could find out from Ted Sorensen regarding the regulations or permit from FERC.

Friday, April 13th the canal water will be turned on.

Discussion on run-off into the canal. Parts of the canal system have no bank, because the canal is below the natural ground level.

Discussion on spreading of manure during the winter and frozen season. Manure solids can be spread during frozen seasons, but must be worked into the ground at the first opportunity. Spreading liquid nutrients on frozen ground is not recommended in best practices, and it is illegal. Liquid through pivots is illegal on frozen ground. Slurry from the bottom of lagoons is considered solid. However, no matter the condition, they are responsible to control the run-off from the field, that is illegal. These requirements apply to dairies only, and not to third party land applications.

Notice of violations are given to dairies who put manure on frozen fields and then the thaw causes run-off. It doesn't matter that the spring run-off was higher than usual, it is still a violation.

Commissioner Wood suggested that they test some wells now, prior to the canal water being turned on and then another test after the water is turned on to get a comparison of before and after.

Discussion on who and when to pull the test samples. The Department of Ag will pull some samples from a few wells that were tested a year ago and then re-test after the canal water goes in. The tests will be sent to the Boise lab because they can better test for e-coli and fecal presence. The results will be communicated to the Commissioners and the well owners. The first round of tests will begin today and the second round of tests will be done around the 1st of May..

Discussion on picking 1 or 2 wells to test more frequently through the whole period to establish a pattern.

Discussion on what to do if we still have issues after the tests.

Discussion on the possibility that the hydropower plant may not be the point of leach.

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Discussion on still doing a dye test on the hydropower plant. Still may not give results to know exactly where the leaks come from.

11:25am Chairman McConnell adjourned the meeting.

Attachments:

Hydropower Plant Licensing, Department of Environmental Quality
Map of area of concern of well contamination from spring 2017.

Respectfully,

Brenda Farnworth

Cresley McConnell, Chairman

Attest:

Brenda Farnworth, Clerk