New Dungeness water management rules include changes sought by Sen. Hargrove

Local News

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Olympia, WA - The future of the Dungeness River watershed and the water supply of hundreds of households and farms in the Sequim area will be preserved under new water management rules adopted by the Washington Department of Ecology.The new rules will set instream flow levels to assure adequate water remains in the river to support the year round habitat of threatened fish populations by allowing for closure of the watershed’s river and streams to future withdrawals if necessary. While the rules will also require the purchasing of mitigation certificates for new wells, Sen. Jim Hargrove, D-Hoquiam, has worked with the department and officials in Clallam County to lessen the impact to local water users.“From the beginning, I have been working with Ecology to ensure that they adopt rules which both protect the resource and ensure that landowners, water users and developers are critical stakeholders with legitimate needs that state water law recognizes must be addressed,” said Hargrove, whose district includes Clallam County.

Over the past months, Hargrove has worked with the department and stakeholders in the Dungeness watershed to allow for fair use of the watershed by current and future users. Amendments to the rules include:Improving the definition of in home domestic water use.Referencing in the rule a conservation standard for average household consumptive use that would allow up to 350 gallons for large households.Ensuring that landowners can collect and store rainwater for domestic and agricultural use without requiring mitigation.Securing $100,000 in Department of Ecology grant funds to offset the costs of the mitigation certificates for in-home use required to obtain building permits in rural areas at least through June 30, 2013.Ensuring that the DOE’s budget request include future funding for in-home use mitigation.The new rules will go into effect on Jan. 2, 2013.The creation of an implementation committee will seek a smooth transition to the new water management rules. While still being designed by the department and Clallam County, the committee is expected to include stakeholders directly impacted by the management rules, including representatives from the development, construction and real estate communities.“Our goal has been to reach an agreement which will allow Clallam County to avoid the water wars which have been seen in other counties and allow the department to put more effort into protecting the resources and the economy of the Dungeness watershed and less money into lawsuits and lawyers,” said Hargrove. “We have worked to make the final rule with the state’s contribution to mitigate in-house domestic use a balance between preservation and fair use that hopefully will accomplish this goal.”