



Idaho Farm Bureau Federation

500 West Washington Street
Boise, Idaho 83702
(208) 342-2688 Fax (208) 342-8585

November 6, 2015

Paula J. Wilson
Hearing Coordinator
Department of Environmental Quality
1410 N. Hilton
Boise, Idaho 83706-1255

RE: Docket No. 58-0102-1201

Dear Ms. Wilson,

On behalf of the more than 74,000 Idaho families who are members of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation, I offer the following comments to the proposed fish tissue/water quality rules that the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) published on October 5, 2015.

Our members do not support the policy decision DEQ has made to set the risk standard at 10^{-6} . The state does have the discretion under EPA's Clean Water Act Guidance to set a risk factor in the range of 10^{-4} to 10^{-6} . While the risk factor choice DEQ has made is within the allowable range, our members do not believe the miniscule additional protection from risk associated with the 10^{-6} risk factor provide additional benefits anywhere close to the significant additional costs that will be borne by industry, municipalities and ultimately the taxpayers and citizens of Idaho.

It is our understanding that a reduction in the risk factor from 10^{-6} to 10^{-5} would be similar to the risk associated with every Idaho citizen driving an additional 11 miles per year. This tiny, incremental amount of associated risk however, stands to save our state economy an estimated \$14 billion or more, which will have far more devastating consequences directly on our citizens and economy through a loss of jobs, higher prices for goods, and higher costs of water treatment.

As an example, we have been told that the average water bill in Boise City would need to increase by at least \$79 per month to pay for the required new treatment works to reach the nearly impossibly high new standards as proposed by DEQ. That is more than double the current rates and would be a significant burden on all families; but especially on fixed-income seniors who would accrue virtually no benefit from the greater expense. Our members do not believe the significant financial burdens are worth the tiny incremental reduction in risk. Furthermore, this higher standard does not meet the state's long-held view that costs and benefits must be carefully weighed when proposing new rules.

The Idaho Farm Bureau strongly recommends that DEQ exercise the discretion allowed by EPA's guidance and use a risk factor of 10^{-5} . There is an insignificant difference in protection of the public health by utilizing the slightly less conservative standard, while there is a real and significant difference in the cost of compliance by both industry and the tax paying public.

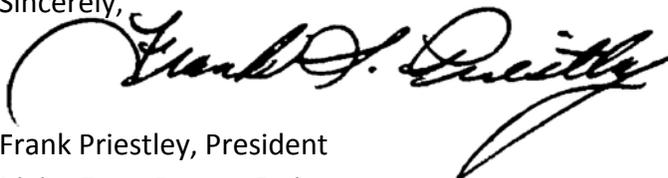
The Idaho Farm Bureau does support DEQ's policy decisions in the following three areas:

1. **Market Fish:** Our members support DEQ's determination that the only market fish with any rational connection to Idaho's water quality are rainbow trout. This is only because Idaho is by far the largest producer of rainbow trout in the nation and, chances are high that any trout purchased will have been raised in Idaho water. Conversely, the inclusion of any market fish not raised in Idaho's waters would require a standard that would be both extremely difficult and expensive for municipalities and industry to meet yet would have no impact whatsoever on the toxics found in those fish.
2. **Anadromous Fish:** We support DEQ's decision to exclude anadromous fish in setting the Human Health Water Quality Criteria standards. Anadromous fish are present in Idaho's waters for only a brief period of their lifespan. Therefore they collect only a negligible amount of contaminants (if any) from Idaho waters. To include their consumption in a risk assessment associated with setting criteria for Idaho waters would be inaccurate, overly conservative and not consistent with the state's goal of using best available science in rule makings.
3. **Probabilistic Risk Assessment:** We support and commend DEQ for choosing to utilize a probabilistic risk assessment approach in developing Idaho's HHWQC. By using the probabilistic approach, DEQ is better able to develop defensible standards that more closely reflect the population and the Idaho state requirement that DEQ use the "best available standards" in setting policy.

In conclusion, we urge DEQ to re-consider the cost versus benefit of using the 10^{-6} risk standard. We believe that it is not only consistent with Idaho's long-held view that costs must not outweigh benefits, but it is also clearly within the established discretion of EPA's own guidance documents for DEQ to choose the 10^{-5} risk factor.

Thank you for opportunity to submit these comments on behalf of the members of the Idaho Farm Bureau Federation. If you have any questions, please contact Russ Hendricks in our Boise office at 342-2688.

Sincerely,



Frank Priestley, President
Idaho Farm Bureau Federation