



Spokane RIVER forum 2019 CONFERENCE

building resiliency

April 16 & 17, 2019 • The Davenport Grand Hotel • Spokane

Register Now »

Join Us

- Natural Resource Managers and Specialists
- Local, State, Tribal and Federal Agencies
- Water Purveyors
- Elected Officials
- Watershed Councils and Conservation Districts
- Conservation Groups
- Recreational Groups
- Property Owners
- Local Businesses
- Chambers of Commerce and Other Associations
- Colleges and Universities
- Students; Interested Citizens

2019 Conference
topics »

Spokane River
headlines »

PCB Water Quality Variance: A Solution for the Spokane River?

Day 2 of the conference will open with a plenary session on the possibility of one or more Washington dischargers pursuing a variance to meet polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) water quality standards for the Spokane River. There are three public and two private sector dischargers operating wastewater treatment facilities that may pursue this option.

"To set up the tent poles of discussion," said Forum Executive Director Andy Dunau, "We're bringing in two speakers with diverse and deep variance experience." Barbara Bennett with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment successfully led development of six Discharger-Specific Variances for various pollutants and watersheds in Colorado. Bennett is currently working on variances to meet additional water quality needs in Colorado.

Guy Alsentzer is staff attorney for Upper Missouri Waterkeeper. Waterkeeper is presently litigating EPA's approval of general, state-wide nutrient variances for wastewater dischargers in Montana, and likewise bird-dogging new proposals that would allow variances for arsenic in all Montana waterways. Guy will discuss the ongoing federal lawsuit concerning nutrient variances as well as legal and pragmatic problems with the recent policy emphasis on variances as a "solution" for state water pollution regulation.

Both Guy and Barbara will share their experiences and lessons learned. Following their presentations will be a panel discussion featuring Spokane County, Kaiser Aluminum, Spokane Riverkeeper, Washington Department of Ecology and EPA.

The backdrop for this conversation is that clean water requirements for the Spokane River include strict limitations on PCBs. These standards became even more stringent in November 2016 when standards changed from 170 parts per quadrillion to seven parts per quadrillion. Because the standard is stringent and PCBs are widespread, persistent, and found in many products, the permitting challenges are very difficult.

Using a variance as part of a long-term strategy to meet water quality standards would be a first in the State of Washington. Specific to PCBs, this would be a first nationally. Adoption of a variance requires a lengthy regulatory undertaking that, if successful, would culminate with a state rule making approved by EPA.

[Register now](#)

2206 S Sherman · Spokane, WA 99203 · 509.535.7084 · www.spokaneriver.net