

State of Idaho

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

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~~ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMORANDUM~~

APPLICATION PROCESSING ~~MEMORANDUM NO. 61~~

TO: WATER ALLOCATION BUREAU, ADJUDICATION BUREAU
AND REGIONAL OFFICES

FROM: NORM YOUNG

SUBJECT: WATER RIGHT FILING REQUIREMENTS FOR INDUSTRIAL
WASTE WATER USE AND TREATMENT (INTERIM POLICY)

DATE: September 27, 1996

PURPOSE OF MEMORANDUM

Because much of southern Idaho is included within areas covered by moratoriums or other designations that prevent or limit approval of new applications to appropriate water, water users are seeking innovative ways of using water for new and expanded projects. The waste water from industrial processes is one source of water for such uses. In addition, more restrictive water quality requirements are causing industrial water users to implement land disposal methods, create wetlands, capture and reuse waste water, and to provide for on-site containment of waste water.

The administrative requirements addressing the use of industrial waste water have not been clearly set forth. Direction is needed to guide staff and water users concerning the types of applications, if any, that need to be made, the criteria for considering such applications, and conditions that may be appropriate for approved applications. This memorandum addresses the water right filing requirements for the treatment of waste water and the reuse of waste water from industrial processes.

This memorandum provides interim guidance pending additional determination of policy and requirements through changes to law, adoption of rules or court rulings. Because a basic premise of this memorandum is that the consumptive use authorized by a water right for industrial purposes can be 100% of the amount diverted, depending on particular factual issues, this memorandum does not apply to waste water from uses which could not be 100% consumptive.

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For purposes of this memorandum "waste water" is effluent, treated or untreated, from authorized beneficial uses under an industrial or other potentially 100% consumptive water right, prior to its being returned to a public water source. Waste water may contain solid waste and other contaminants, but for purposes of this memorandum it is a liquid, fluid enough to flow in an open channel or unpressurized pipeline.

AN EXAMPLE OF A TYPICAL SITUATION

An industrial user has for many years disposed of waste water diverted from the aquifer under a licensed right through a series of ponds which evaporate part of the water with the remainder seeping to the regional aquifer. In this instance, DEQ is requiring that water not be allowed to seep to the aquifer and has suggested land application. The land available for disposing of the waste is in sagebrush and does not have an irrigation water right. Each gallon of waste water land applied will have to be diluted with 3 to 4 gallons of fresh water. The net depletion from the aquifer will be increased 400 af/yr by the new water treatment requirements. Are water right related approvals required from IDWR to authorize surface disposal of the waste water?

LEGAL PRINCIPLES

The continuum of options for considering this matter is bounded by two principles. At one end of the continuum, the treatment necessary to comply with water quality requirements may be a part of the diversion and beneficial use authorized under the industrial water right. If the industrial right is a fully consumptive right, then as water quality requirements require a change in treatment, the amount of the water consumed can be increased. However, the diversion rate, annual volume diverted, and season of use established under the right cannot be increased. Any fresh water needed to dilute the waste water must be within the quantity elements of the industrial right or be covered by another water right.

At the other end of the continuum, the industrial right may be construed to authorize only the beneficial use established and historically used under the industrial right. Any increase in consumptive use (or other element of the right) would require a new water right. Depending upon the availability of water for appropriation, this may require the holder of the industrial right to mitigate injury to other users or obtain an existing right to cover the expanded consumption.

A brief review of the legal and administrative precedents (see Phil Rassier's attached memorandum) indicates that the existing law in Idaho does not provide strong guidance as to whether the land application of industrial waste water initiated to comply with water quality requirements should be considered to come within the original purpose of use of the industrial right, whether it should be treated as an added beneficial use of the water requiring a new water right, or whether some intermediate consideration should be used.

APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES

IDWR will apply the following policies until or unless further guidance is provided:

1. Waste water treatment necessary to meet adopted state water quality requirements will be considered to be a part of the use authorized under the industrial right. The method of treatment must be "reasonable." IDWR will consider a treatment method to be reasonable if it is in accordance with best management practices recognized by Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or other responsible state or federal agency.

2. Consumptive use can increase up to the amount determined to be consistent with the original water right as reasonably necessary to meet treatment requirements. Diversion rate, annual volume diverted, and season of use cannot exceed the permitted, licensed or decreed amounts for these parameters.

* 3. If the treatment method for industrial waste water is changed to land application on cultivated fields or any other method that beneficially uses the water, the industrial right must be changed to include the new use. This will require a transfer application to be filed, processed and approved in accordance with Section 42-222, Idaho Code, to include a new location for a waste treatment practice, such as land application, and other conditions of approval that may be necessary to prevent injury to other valid water rights.

4. For new uses of industrial waste water that are not necessary to meet water quality requirements, an application for permit to appropriate water should be filed as required by Section 42-107, Idaho Code.

5. Fresh water required to dilute the waste water for treatments such as land application must be diverted in accordance with a water right. This can be the industrial right if adequate rate and volume are available under the right. If not, another right must be provided. In areas where new allocations are limited or prevented by moratorium orders or other designations, establishment of a new right will require appropriate provisions to mitigate the depletion from the source.

Attachment: P. Rassier's Memorandum