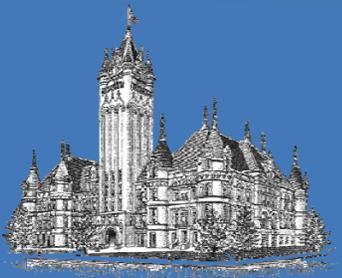


Instream Flow & Exempt Wells

Water Availability & Sustainability
Advisory Group
3/29/12



SPOKANE COUNTY

Overview

- What is an “Instream Flow”
- Instream Flow on Little Spokane River
- Instream Flow & Exempt Wells

State of Washington Water Code

- Water Resources Act of 1971
 - Waters of the state are allocated for beneficial uses
 - Beneficial Uses are:
 - Domestic
 - Stock Watering
 - Industrial
 - Commercial
 - Agricultural
 - Irrigation
 - Hydroelectric Power Production
 - Mining
 - Fish & Wildlife Maintenance & Enhancement
 - Recreational
 - Thermal Power Production Purposes
 - Preservation of Environmental and Aesthetic Values

State of Washington Water Code

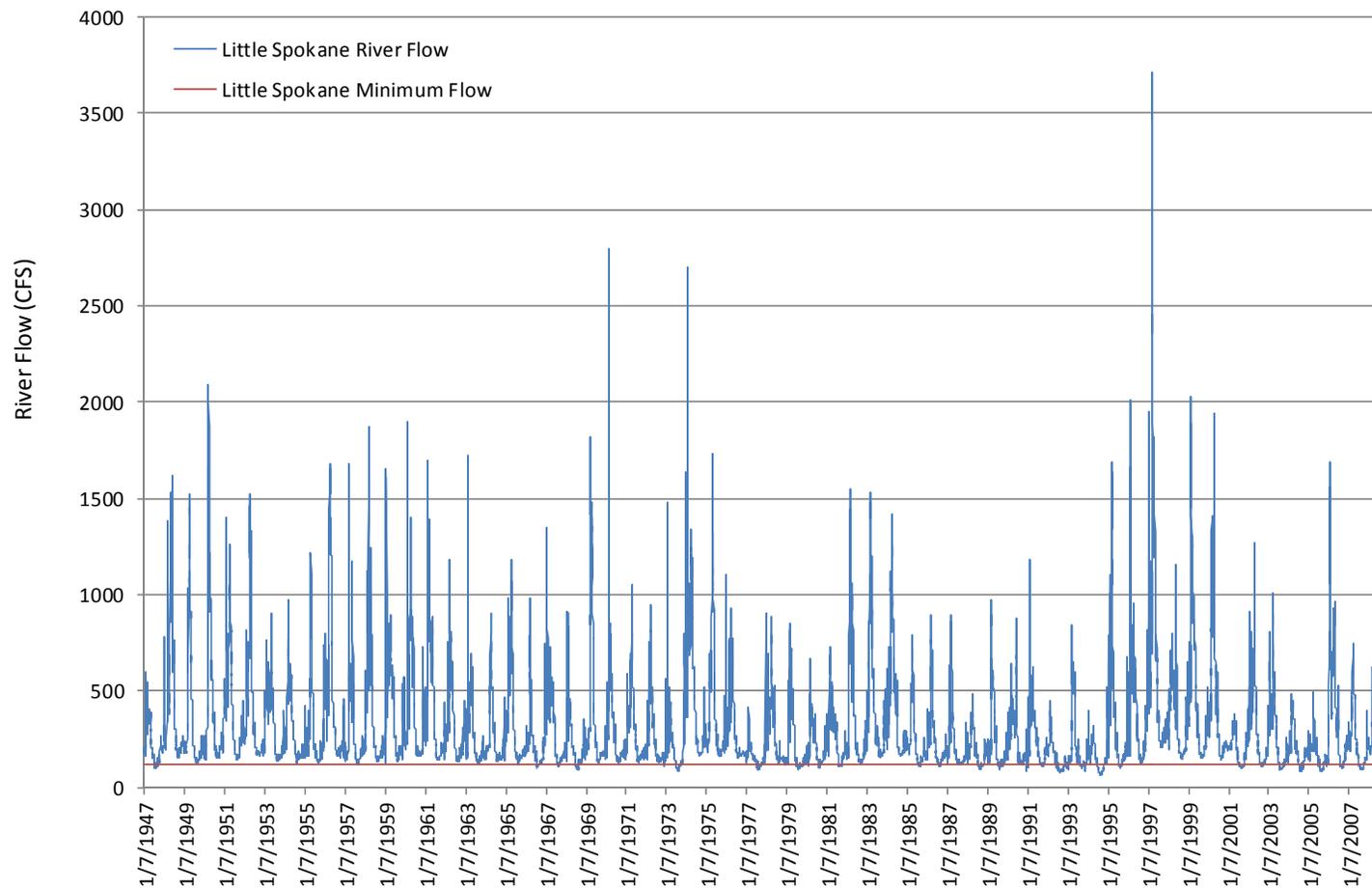
- Water Resources Act of 1971 (cont.)
 - The quality of the natural environment shall be protected and, where possible, enhanced as follows:
 - Perennial rivers and streams of the state shall be retained with base flows necessary to provide for preservation of wildlife, fish, scenic, aesthetic and other environmental values, and navigational values.

State of Washington Water Code

- Minimum Water Flows and Levels (RCW 90.22 & RCW 90.03)
 - Ecology has the exclusive authority to set minimum water flows or levels for stream, lakes, or other public waters to:
 - Protect fish, game, birds or other wildlife resources
 - Recreational values
 - Aesthetic values
 - Minimum flow levels set in Washington Administrative Code (WAC)
 - Minimum flow levels are essentially a water right for the stream/river
 - Water rights with a priority date before the date of the instream flow are not impacted when a stream falls below the minimum flow
 - Water rights with a priority date after the date of the instream flow are curtailed when a stream falls below the minimum flow

Steam Flow vs Instream Flow

Little Spokane River Flow 1947-2007



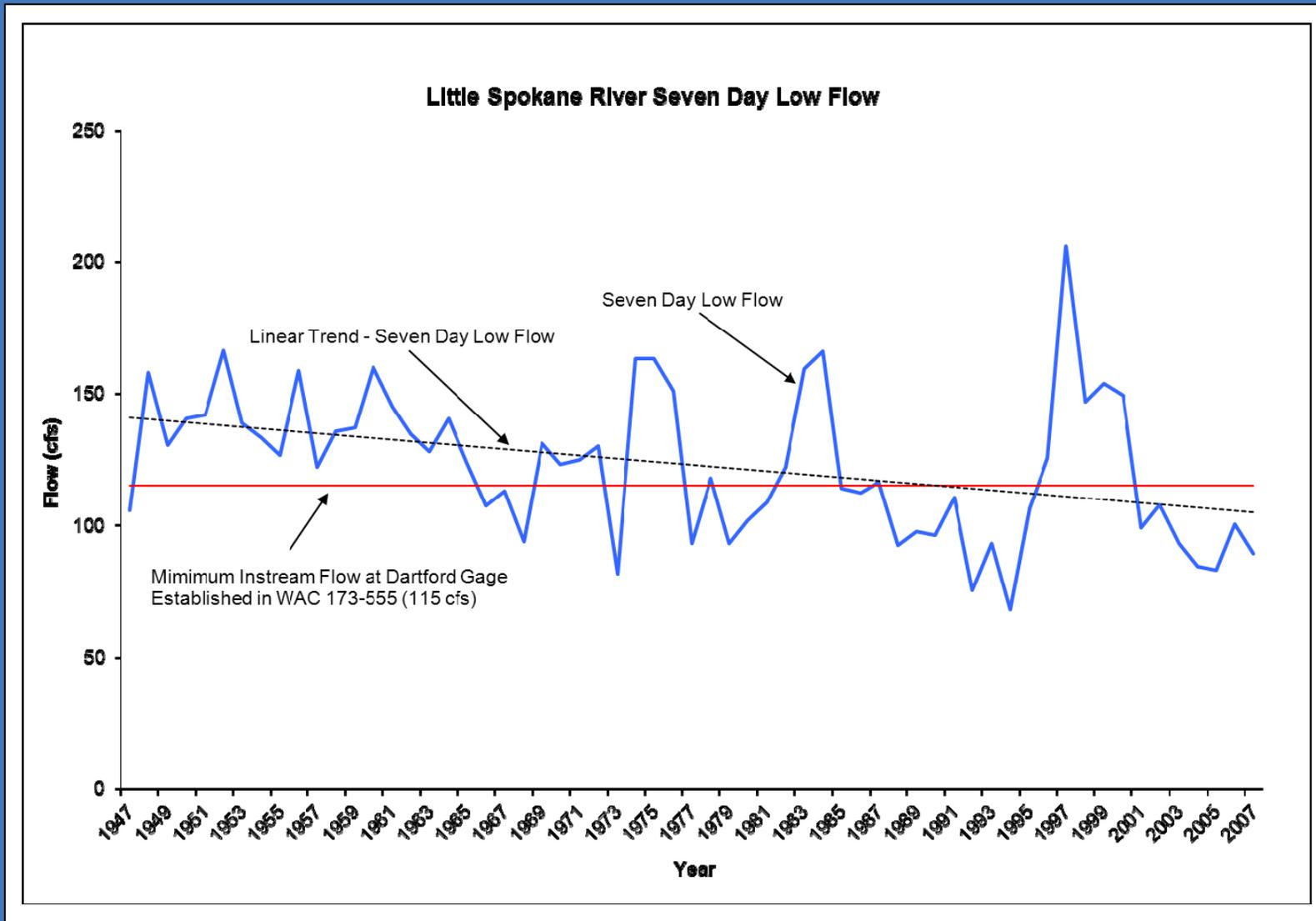
How are instream flows set

- Evaluate the flow necessary to support
 - Protect fish, game, birds or other wildlife resources
 - Recreational values
 - Aesthetic values
- Studies done to evaluate the stream flow necessary to provide fish habitat.
- Stream flow needed for fish habitat usually protect aesthetic and recreational values

Little Spokane River Instream Flow

- Established in 1976 in WAC 173-555
- 115 cfs minimum flow at Dartford (Wandermere Golf Course)
- When stream flow at Dartford falls below 115 cfs all water rights issued after that date are ordered to stop using water (curtailed).

Little Spokane River Instream Flow



Little Spokane River Instream Flow

- No new water rights are being issued in Little Spokane Basin
- Water rights in Little Spokane Basin issued after 1976 have been curtailed 21 times in the last 33 years
- Since 1976 over 8,900 permit exempt wells have been drilled in Little Spokane Basin
- In the absence of better information Ecology assumes that a groundwater withdrawal impacts stream flow.

Little Spokane River Instream Flow

- Relationship to Advisory Group
 - Are a new well's impact on river flows an important consideration?
 - Does every new well impact flows at the critical times of the year?
 - Are there methods to demonstrate the impact of a well on river flows at the critical time of the year?