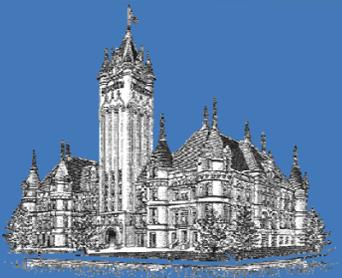


**ATTACHMENT H:**  
**INSTREAM FLOW PRESENTATION**  
**MARCH 29, 2012 ADVISORY GROUP MEETING**

# Instream Flow & Exempt Wells

Water Availability & Sustainability  
Advisory Group  
3/29/12



SPOKANE COUNTY

# Overview

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

# State of Washington Water Code

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- 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

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- 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.

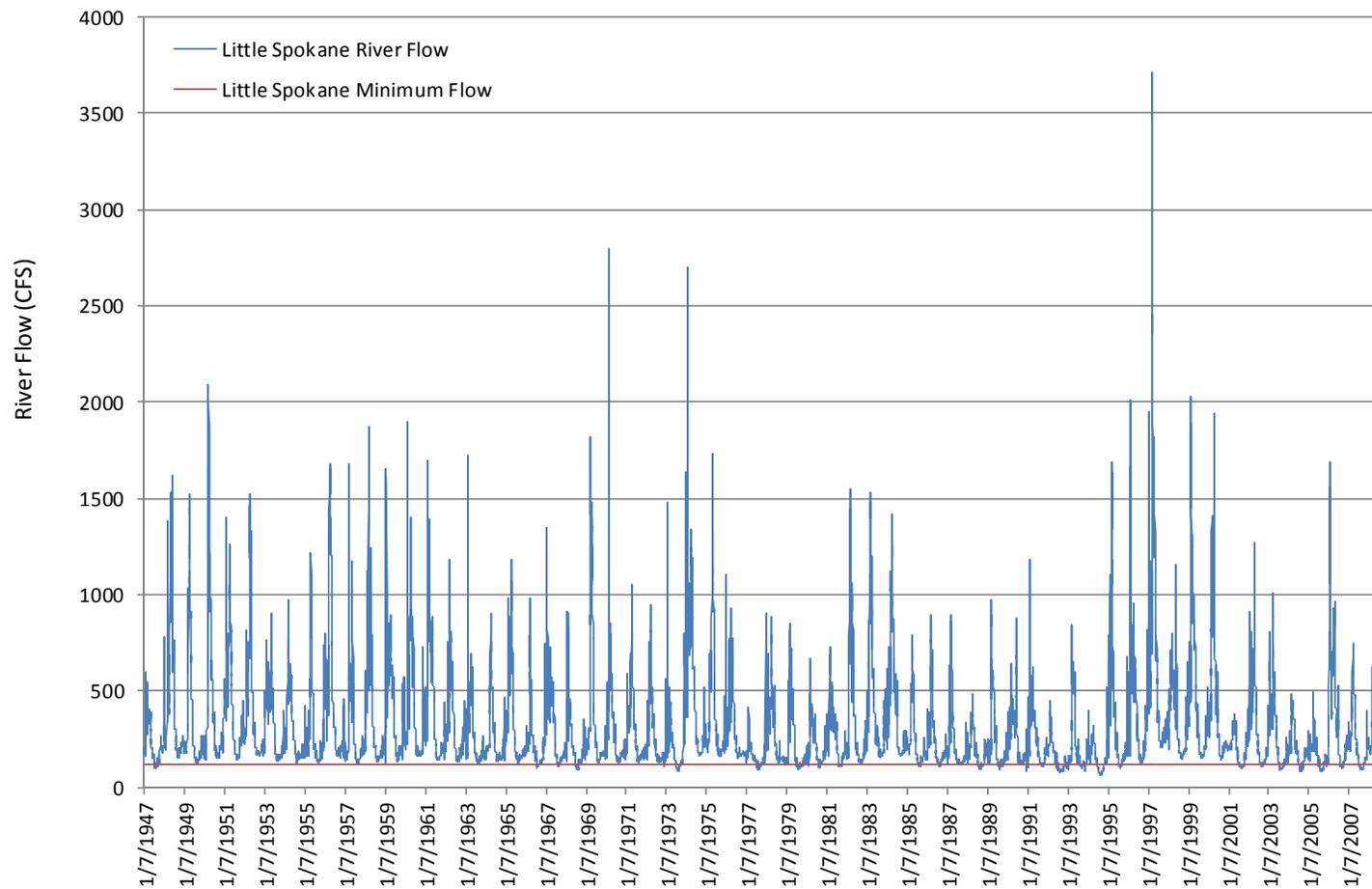
# State of Washington Water Code

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- **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

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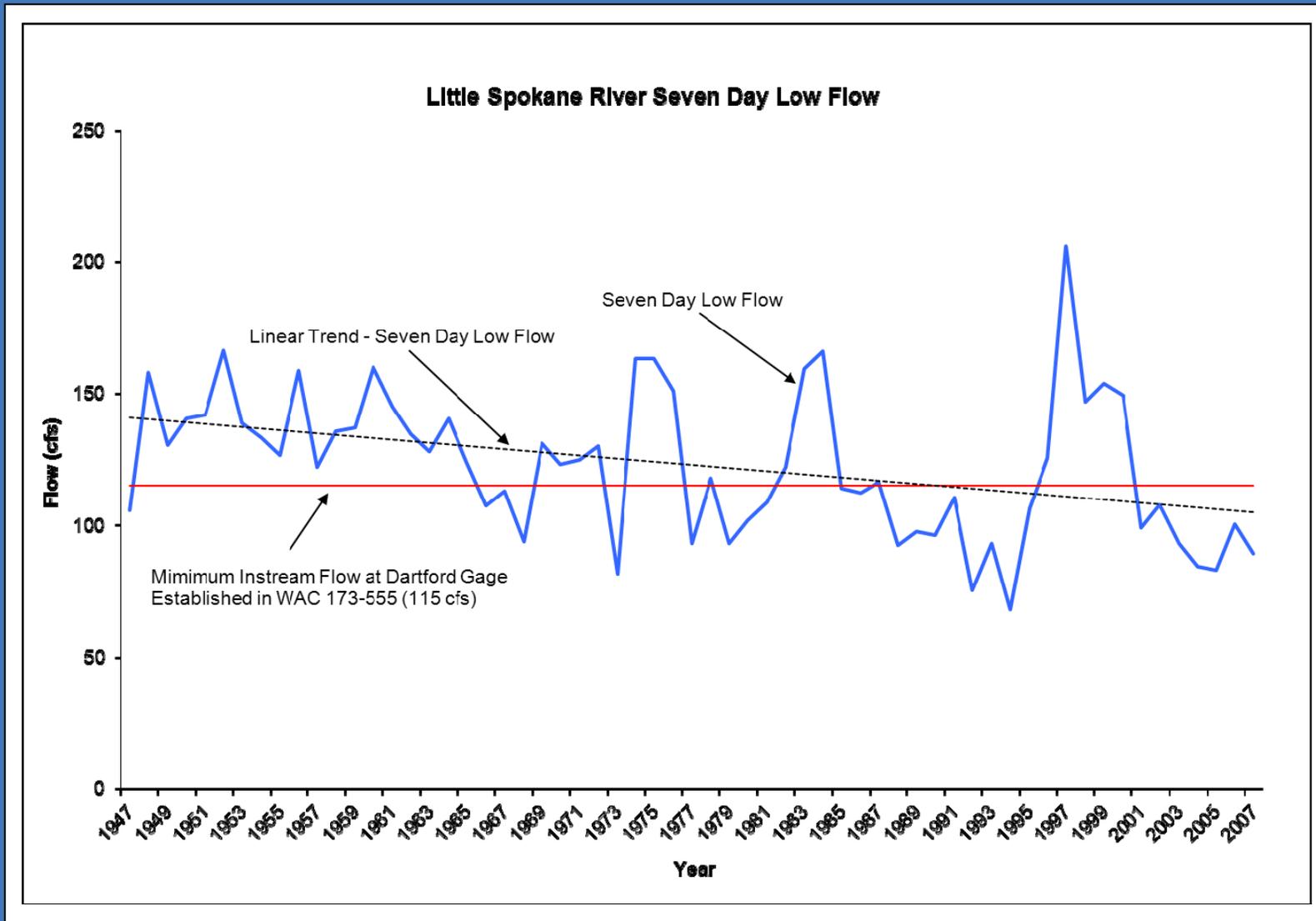
- Evaluate the flow necessary to support
  - Protect fish, game, birds or other wildlife resources
  - Recreational values
  - Aesthetic values
- Studies done to evaluate the stream flow necessary to provide fish habitat.
- Stream flow needed for fish habitat usually protect aesthetic and recreational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

## Little Spokane River Instream Flow

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- 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

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- 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

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- 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?