

Response to Comments

Garden Creek Farms
NPDES Permit Number: ID0028533
November 15, 2018

On October 15, 2018, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 (EPA) issued a public notice for the proposed reissuance of Garden Creek Farms draft National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit No. ID0028533. The public comment period closed November 14, 2018.

During the public comment period, the EPA received comments from the following:

- Josh Johnson, Idaho Conservation League

This document presents the comments received and provides corresponding response to those comments. No revisions were made to the permit as a result of comments received.

Comment 1. EPA's Fact Sheet notes the following: "However, because Garden Creek Farms has shifted towards using more recirculated wastewater, and that could affect the effluent quality, the TBELs may need to be modified in the future" (pg. 13). We request that EPA explain this comment further, as it has potential implications for permit limits. On a percentage basis, how much recirculated wastewater did Garden Creek Farms used to use, and how much do they use now? Does the increased use of recirculated wastewater result in additional TP and/or TSS discharge?

Our overarching question is this: If the numeric TBELs for TSS and TP in the 2007 permit were based on facility-specific data, and that facility-specific data has apparently changed to using more recirculated wastewater (which could affect effluent quality), then why is EPA using the exact same TBELs as in the 2007 permit?

Response. The previous owner did not operate the hatchery using recirculation, but as stated on page 9 of the Fact Sheet, the facility currently recirculates 70 percent of its wastewater. The recirculating system is intended to reduce water usage, but the treatment technology of quiescent zones and filtration combined with a full flow settling basin is the same, so there is not anticipated to be additional TP or TSS discharges. No Garden Creek Farms (formerly Epicenter) data were available when the TBELs were developed for the 2007 permit; they are based on hatchery data from two other warmwater hatcheries in Idaho raising tilapia. A limited number of samples collected by Garden Creek Farms in 2016 and 2018 were reviewed in comparison to the TBELs. Based on this comparison, they appear appropriate. However, the Fact Sheet mentions they may need to be modified in the future because analysis of a larger dataset specific to Garden Creek Farms may indicate the TBELs should be adjusted.

Comment 2. We request that the EPA elaborate on the reasons why Garden Creek Farms cannot immediately comply with the TSS effluent limits set forth in this permit. What is preventing the facility from doing so? What are the expected improvements they will have to make to their facility to achieve compliance with the new TSS limits?

Response. The basis for the compliance schedule is explained in Section VII.A. of the Fact Sheet (p. 18). While the facility can meet the TSS TBEL, the effluent limit is based on the TMDL wasteload allocation, which is a product of the TBEL (12.7 mg/L) and the facility's average flow under previous ownership (6.9 cfs). The current facility flow is 12 cfs, so the facility will effectively need to treat to 7.2 mg/L or less at its current discharge rate to meet the limit. Since this is the first time a load limit has been applied to Garden Creek Farms and the limited recent effluent data show the facility cannot currently meet this limit, the authorization of a compliance schedule is consistent with the regulations at 40 CFR 122.47 and Idaho WQS at IDAPA 58.01.02.400.03. Identifying or speculating about actions necessary to meet effluent limits is outside the scope of NPDES permit development.