

News release

Contact: Christine L. Stone, 971-673-1282 office; 503-602-8027 cell;

Christine.L.Stone@state.or.us

Kathleen Vidoloff, 971-673-1012 office; 503-975-0510 cell,

kathleen.g.vidoloff@state.or.us

Oregon Public Health Division grants variance for Portland's Bull Run watershed

The variance means Bull Run water will not need treatment if specific conditions are met by the City of Portland

The Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division today released its final order granting a variance to the requirement that the City of Portland treat Bull Run source water for *Cryptosporidium*. The final order granting the variance to the federal and state requirement for treatment contains important conditions to provide safeguards to protect the health of Oregonians being served by unfiltered Bull Run water. The division held a public hearing and accepted comments during two public comment periods after releasing its proposed order in November.

"Our public health team carefully considered all comments received and thoroughly examined the science and the specifics of conditions at Bull Run. Although *Cryptosporidium* can present a serious health threat, at this time, with the protective conditions we have itemized in the Final Order, treating Bull Run source water for *Cryptosporidium* is not necessary to protect the public's health. Therefore, we have issued the variance requested by the City of Portland," said Administrator Gail Shibley, J.D., Oregon Public Health Division, Office of Environmental Public Health.

In addition to ongoing watershed protections, water monitoring, inspections, reporting and notification requirements, the variance may be revoked at any time if Public Health Division experts reasonably believe that lack of treatment poses an unreasonable threat to the public's health.

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“This is a good example of why it’s important that Oregon have a strong Drinking Water Program. Because of this program at the state we are able to enforce federal regulations that ensure safe drinking water for Oregon, but also have the flexibility to tailor enforcement to meet the specific conditions in our state,” said Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., director of Oregon Public Health Division. “The EPA allows Oregon some flexibility because they know we have the capacity to interpret and apply these regulations safely and responsibly.”

After the first public comment period closed January 3, 2012, the City of Portland reported that *Cryptosporidium* was detected in a single sample taken at the Bull Run intake December 30, 2011. Water samples collected elsewhere in the Bull Run watershed also showed the presence of *Cryptosporidium* in December and January. *Cryptosporidium* would be expected to be found among animals in the Bull Run watershed, and the low level found at the intake was not interpreted as a sign of serious public health risk.

Experts from Public Health Division, Oregon Department of Justice and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality did a thorough, thoughtful review of the variance request, including assessment of the law, the science, the data and the watershed. The weight of the present scientific evidence led to the decision.

A copy of the Final Order to grant a variance can be found at:

<http://public.health.oregon.gov/HealthyEnvironments/DrinkingWater/Pages/BullRunVarianceRequest.aspx>.

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