

## CHAPTER 5 — Water Use, Water Rights

**Irrigation** - to supply (as land) with water by artificial means

**DOE** - protecting Washington's environment; supervises the usage of air, land, and water

**Depleting** - using up resources

**Pollution** - making unclean by man-made waste

**Divert** - change the direction of

**Conservation** - planned management of natural resources

**T**he Methow Valley Irrigation District (MVID) diverts water from the surfaces of the Methow and Twisp rivers for irrigation. Recently, the district's method of irrigation has been under attack by the Department of Ecology (DOE).

The DOE has accused Methow Valley residents of depleting water supplies in the Methow and Twisp rivers. The department claims that too much water is taken from the rivers and that this loss of water damages fish runs. The DOE says such use of water is a violation of pollution laws. Loss of water causes water temperature to rise, making it difficult for fish to survive. But, is depletion that increases water temperature a pollution issue?

Members of the MVID say no. They do not release pollutants, rather they divert water. They maintain that the DOE is trying to take away their water rights in an attempt to further salmon conservation. Irrigators insist that they are careful and aware of their usage of water.

When the citizens of Methow Valley purchased their land, they also bought the water rights (dating back to the early 1900s). The MVID has been working with the DOE for more than 14 years to improve their irrigation systems and help conserve water. The MVID and DOE are working to reach an agreement that satisfies environmental concerns and respects water rights.

**Does the MVID have the right to divert water for irrigation?  
Do you agree with the DOE that this is an issue of pollution? Explain.**