



NEWS SPLASH

Winter 2004

DISTRICT TO CONNECT TO REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY

The Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District has been supplying water to its customers for over 50 years. The past 25 years have been a period of intense growth and development, with as many as 1,000 new customers connected to the system each year. During the 1980's, two factors affected what had previously been a routine process for obtaining new water for the growing area. First, the population growth rate expanded logarithmically, up to 20 percent at times. In addition, the Washington State Department of Ecology's methods and criteria for reviewing and issuing new water rights were modified, resulting in a more time-consuming process. The District became concerned that water service demand might exceed available groundwater supply.

How did the District respond to new water service requests?

Since 1989, the District has imposed limitations on new water service connections on three occasions. In each case, the District was trying to obtain new sources of water so that the limitations could be lifted. In 1998, the District allocated the remaining water supply represented by existing groundwater rights for the Plateau Zone of the District, and imposed the most recent limitation. Since that time, the District has been operating under an allocation process to determine which properties could obtain new water service.

In the current allocation process, property owners can apply for new water service through a random drawing (often referred to as the "Water Lottery") that is usually held every four months. The water service provided through the allocation process is not from a new water supply, but is obtained from development projects with previously allocated water service, where the project was either cancelled or reduced in size.

What are the District's water supply options?

In 1998, the District was in the process of updating the District's Water Comprehensive Plan, which includes consideration of how to supply water service to the properties within the District's service area. The Plan indicated that the District's service area is currently operated as two separate groundwater systems: the Cascade View Zone, generally located north of Redmond-Fall City Road, and the Plateau Zone, the area south of Redmond-Fall City Road, which includes the service area on the Sammamish Plateau. During development of the Plan, the District held two public open houses, and the District Board of Commissioners held numerous Board meetings where different water supply options were discussed. The Water Comprehensive Plan was completed and adopted by the Board of Commissioners in May 2001, and included four alternative water supply options.

Each of the four water supply options included continued use of groundwater in the Cascade View Zone. The four water supply options for the Plateau Zone included one option that pursued only additional

groundwater supplies, with no connection to the regional water system. The option relying solely on groundwater supply in the Plateau Zone was not chosen as the primary option, based on notification from the Department of Ecology that it was very unlikely that the District would be able to obtain sufficient additional groundwater resources to support the land use zoning set by the Cities of Sammamish and Issaquah, and King County.



View of the Tolt River Watershed, in the Cascade foothills east of Carnation, Washington

The other three water supply options all included connection to the regional water system operated by the City of Seattle. Seattle utilizes water from the Cedar and Tolt Rivers, and currently supplies water to 22 regional water purveyors. The difference between the three options was based on the point of connection to the regional water system. During the process, the following questions were raised:

- 1) Would the system be connected from the north?
- 2) Would the system be connected from the south?
- 3) Would the entire Plateau Zone system of the District receive a blended water supply of mixed surface water and groundwater?
- 4) Would a portion of the system be segregated to receive only groundwater? The groundwater segregation consideration recognized that the District shares water storage in its distribution system with Northeast Sammamish Sewer and Water District. The segregated area would be that area using the shared storage facility.

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The Water Comprehensive Plan that was adopted in 2001 based financial decisions on the water supply option that included connection to the regional water system to the north, with a small portion of the Plateau Zone segregated to receive groundwater only. However, in 2002, the District Board of Commissioners adopted an amendment to the 2001 Plan that changed the primary water supply option to connect to the regional water system to the south, but which continued to have portions of the Plateau Zone segregated to receive groundwater only. The 2002 Amendment also noted that the District was most likely to obtain a contract to purchase water from Seattle's regional water system through the Cascade Water Alliance. The Cascade Water Alliance is a consortium of eight Eastside municipalities and districts that have joined together to provide water supply for their current and future demands. The members of Cascade include the Cities of Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Issaquah and Tukwila, and the Covington, Skyway Water and Sewer, and Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer Districts. Collectively, the members serve nearly 300,000 people.

The Water Comprehensive Plan also included adoption of a policy to safeguard the health of its customers by adding chlorine for disinfection and maintaining a chlorine residual in the distribution system. The plan further noted that the District Board would need to consider fluoridation of the water system, especially if a water supply option that connected to the regional surface water system was implemented, since Seattle's current water supply is fluoridated.

How do we implement our water supply options?

The District is pursuing implementation of decisions made in the Water Comprehensive Plan. Before the existing District system can receive water from the regional water system, there are three events that must occur: the Cascade Water Alliance must have water available to sell to the District; a pipeline must be constructed to

connect the District's distribution system to the regional water system; and water treatment improvements must be made to the District's system to allow the District to meet water quality standards for surface water in areas where there is surface water blended with groundwater.

The District is currently designing the pipeline connection and is planning to build this link to the regional water supply in the first half of 2004. The District is also currently working on designs of water treatment facilities to add chlorine to the water system to areas receiving blended water supplies. This treatment addition will also meet the District's policy of chlorinating the water to provide a higher level of public health protection.

What challenges lie ahead for the District?

In addition to chlorine, the regional water supply also contains fluoride. The District Board is considering whether to supplement the groundwater supplies with fluoride to provide consistent levels of fluoridation to District customers, or let the fluoride level vary each day based on the amount of water supplied from the regional system on any particular day. Removing fluoride from the water supplied by the regional water system was considered, but is not being pursued further due to very high costs. In addition, information from a recent survey of District customers indicated that approximately 65 percent of those surveyed would support adding fluoride to the drinking water.

The work underway may allow the connection to the regional water system to occur by summer 2004. The District will continue to update information on the progress of the regional water connection and implementation of chlorine and fluoride treatment facilities. Please contact the District if you would like further information.

COMMISSIONER PROFILE



Commissioner Lloyd Warren brings years of experience in public water works to the Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District. Lloyd received both his Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Washington. He is licensed as a Professional Engineer with the State of Washington, and has worked for twenty years in public water and wastewater utility management. Lloyd received the Government Professional Engineer of the Year in 2003 from the Puget Sound

Engineering Council, and the Best of Bellevue award in 2000 for the Best Public Official. He has lived in the Sammamish and Issaquah areas for nearly thirty years. He has four children who were schooled in the Issaquah School District, and three grandchildren. Lloyd is a long time adventure traveler. He has not only climbed numerous Cascade mountains, but has also guided climbs on various peaks, including Mount Rainier. He has been kayaking in Belize and rafting in the Grand Canyon. In 2003, Lloyd climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, accompanied by his wife and son.



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Commissioner meetings are held the first, second and third Mondays at 3:00 p.m. at the District office.