

# Whatcom County Water District # 7

## 2018 Water Quality Report

28 JUNE 2019

This report is a requirement of the Safe Drinking Water Act. It provides you with a summary of the tests performed on your drinking water in 2018 so you can assess for yourself how clean your water is. Much of this report is technical in nature, and much of the language used is required by law. If you have any trouble understanding the content, or have any questions you are welcome to call Lab Supervisor Peg Wendling at 778-7872.

**Water District #7** is a reseller of water. All water sold by the District is purchased from the City of Bellingham and has been processed by the city's water treatment plant, located in Whatcom Falls Park.

The City's water and thus the District water, comes from Lake Whatcom. Lake Whatcom is a natural reservoir, located east of the City of Bellingham, which is where the city draws its water from and then pumps it to the Filtration Plant, to undergo filtration and disinfection. The City maintains a comprehensive water quality-testing program. Water District #7 also tests for the presence of coliform bacteria and residual chlorine on a regular basis to help ensure a safe reliable supply of water.

The sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams ponds, reservoirs, springs and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and radioactive material and can pick up substances resulting from animal or human activity. All raw water, including all surface water must go through a treatment process before it is safe to drink.

"Some people may be more vulnerable to drinking water contaminants than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons, such as people with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplant, people with HIV-AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk for infections. These people

should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/Centers for Disease control guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800) 426-4791."

"Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling

The Environmental Protection Agency prescribes regulations which limit the amount of certain contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The water supplied by Whatcom County Water District #7 exceeded all Federal Guidelines last year.

# Reportable Parameters For 2018

## Disinfection By-Products:

**Total Trihalomethanes (THM) and Haloacetic Acids (HAA).**

THMs and HAAs are the most common type of disinfection by-products (DBP's). The City samples for DBP's at eight sites in the water distribution system each quarter. Levels for 2018 were:

THM: Average: (all sites) 28.7 ppb: Range: 12.3 to 42.5 ppb

HAA: Average (all sites) 15.5 ppb Range: 11.1 to 24.6 ppb

Average MCL must be below 80 ppb THM and below 60 ppb HAA

**Water District #7's average disinfection by-product levels were: THM Average 46.75 ppb Range: 35.5 to 49.8 ppb. HAA Average: 13.9 ppb Range: 8.6 to 17.9 ppb.**

**Free Chlorine Residual:** Chlorine levels are monitored continuously at the water treatment plant and daily at different points throughout the water distribution system.

Of the 1,114 chlorine samples collected in the distribution system the average chlorine was 0.44 ppm with a range of <0.02 to .93 ppm.

There is a requirement for a measurable chlorine residual at 95% of all monitoring sites a month.

**Lead and Copper;** Lead and copper are monitored every three years in customer's homes to assess the amount of corrosion occurring in home plumbing. Homes selected are those with leaded solder and copper pipe. The most recent sampling was in 2017. Sampling will be conducted again in 2020.

**Lead**—the 90th percentile value of 44 homes sampled showed lead at the 4ppb level. The range of values was <1 to 15 ppb. One site was at the action level. This home was shown to have 2 ppb lead after running the faucet for 30 seconds.

**Copper**—The 90th percentile value of the 37 homes sampled was 48 ppb. The range of values was 9 to 99 ppb. No sites were above the action level.

The allowable highest 90th percentile values are: Lead: 15 ppb Copper: 1300 ppb

**Total and Fecal Coliform Bacteria:** The City samples a minimum of 90 sites in the water distribution system each month for indicator bacteria. Of the 1,114 samples collected for total and fecal coliform in 2018, 1% were positive for total coliform in September and 2% were positive total Coliform in October. 0% positive samples for all other months. No sample was positive for fecal coliform bacteria in 2018.

Allowable highest percentage of total coliform positive samples a month is 5%. The presence of any fecal coliform in drinking water samples of two consecutive samples would require public notification of this problem within 24 hours.

**Water District #7 takes two coliform samples each month within the District. No positive coliform was detected in 2018.**

**Turbidity:** Turbidity is a measurement of the clarity of the water. The city monitors turbidity continuously at the beginning, middle and end of the treatment process. Turbidity reported for compliance is in the treated water. Bellingham's single highest turbidity level for 2018 was 0.06 nephelometric units (NTU). The city has met the 0.3 NTU requirement in 2018 100% of the time. Compliance means filtered water turbidity shall be less than or equal to 0.3 NTU in at least 95% of the measurements made each month and shall never exceed 1.0 NTU.

**Inorganics:** Three inorganic substances with MCLs were detected in the treated water in 2018 *well below* the SRL. None of these were close to the EPA's MCL, but we have opted to report these for your information. Barium = .007ppm, allowed = 2 ppm. Nitrate = .22 ppm, allowed = 10ppm. Nitrite/nitrate = .22 ppm, allowed = 10ppm.

\*\* Elevated levels of lead in drinking water can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. In Bellingham fortunately lead is not found in the treated water, but lead in drinking water can come from pipes and faucets in our customers' homes. The City of Bellingham is responsible for providing high quality drinking water, but cannot control the variety of materials used in customer's plumbing. When your water has been sitting for several hours, you can minimize the potential for lead exposure by flushing your tap for at least 30 seconds before using the water for drinking or cooking. You can capture this water to use on plants. If you are concerned about lead in your water you may wish to have your water analyzed by a local laboratory. To learn more about lead in water, go to: <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>

ppm = parts per million, ppb = parts per billion, MCL = maximum contaminant level, AL = Action Level  
MRDL = maximum Residual Disinfectant Level, MCLG = Maximum contaminant Level Goal

# June 2018

## **Water System Plan**

The District Commissioners oversee the technical, managerial, and financial capacity of the district to ensure a long-term, safe and reliable supply of water for its customers. In 2008 a Comprehensive Water System Plan identified that essential water system improvements were needed. We are very pleased to report that long term low interest funding was secured and all of the planned improvements have been completed. These improvements reduced high pressure in areas with recurring leaks and costly repairs; raised pressure in other areas to meet minimum water service standards; improved fire protection; and significantly increase overall reliability of the District for the long term. These improvements also allow us to significantly reduce the number of customers without water during an emergency repair.

## **Water Use Efficiency**

Water use efficiency benefits our community and our customers. Reducing individual water use can lower monthly water bills. Reducing lost water, primarily due to leaks, also indirectly reduces water bills because we purchase less water from Bellingham and less electricity to operate the system. Think of “water efficiency” as a way to eliminate wasteful water practices and promote the long-term goal of saving water and reducing costs. State law also requires to district to implement a water use efficiency program.

In addition to public awareness, leak detection, and infrastructure replacement, the district implemented an increasing rate structure in 2008 to encourage water use efficiency. This means that the cost of water increases as you consume more. Customers can directly impact their water bill by using less water. A leaking faucet or toilet wastes thousands of gallons a year and only cost a few dollars to repair. Letting the water run while washing your car or watering the lawn too often are simple habits you can change that will also save you money. Faucet aerators and low-flow showerheads are very inexpensive and easy to install water saving measures. Most people don't realize that in one year, common water leaks in your home can waste enough water to fill a backyard swimming pool.

The District is always looking for water leaks during regular maintenance and meter reading. But we need your help to identify possible leaks by reporting running water, unusual wet spots or green areas, especially during the summer months. One way for a customer to identify a possible leak on their property is when their water use or water bill increases significantly. It is important to remember that the district is responsible for repairs and maintenance up to and including the water meter serving a customer, but everything beyond the water meter, including any pressure reducing device on the customer's side of the meter, is the responsibility of the property owner and cannot be repaired by the district.

The District's water loss has greatly improved over the last year.

In 2018 we purchased 46,935,800 Gallons of water and delivered 43,967,900 Gallons leaving about 6.3% unaccounted for most likely due to leaks and construction. This is about a 13.5% reduction over 2015 and we expect this to continue dropping as we find and repair more leaks in the coming months.

## **Leak Adjustments**

Customers frequently ask if they can get a credit on their bill when they have a leak on their side of the meter. The District purchases all of its water from the City of Bellingham and is obligated to pass that cost onto the customers and therefore is not able to credit a bill for water loss due to a leak. However, the District does have a "Leak Credit Policy" that allows for an adjustment to the rate paid for lost water due a **substantiated** leak. If you find a leak, make repairs immediately, keep receipts and photographic record of the repair, and then contact the district about how to apply for a Leak Adjustment. Below is a summary of the District's Leak Adjustment Policy.

### **LEAK ADJUSTMENT POLICY**

*The District may adjust the commodity charge for high water bills due to a leak. "Leak" refers to a structural or mechanical failure of the customer's water piping system resulting in a significant loss of water. No adjustment shall be made for a loss less than 1,000 cubic feet per bi-monthly billing period or more than one adjustment in a twelve (12) month period per account. Intentional or accidental water use, loss due to vandalism, or theft does constitute a leak.*

*When the District observes a leak or high usage it will attempt to notify the occupant or property owner (**phone #'s greatly appreciated**), but it shall remain the property owners' responsibility to discover and repair any leak. To be eligible for a leak adjustment, the owner must complete repairs and submit a signed adjustment request along with proof of repairs, within two (2) weeks of the date the occupant or owner was notified by the District, or otherwise knew or should have known of the leak. If there are no invoices or receipts available, a written assertion that the leak was repaired is acceptable. Failure to complete the preceding may forfeit any opportunity for a leak adjustment.*

*The quantity of water eligible for a leak adjustment will be the total water used for the billing period in which the leak was identified less the quantity of water used from the same billing period in the previous year. If the customer has occupied the house for less than one year, the quantity to be deducted will be the average of the three billing cycles immediately prior to the discovery of the leak.*

*When a leak occurs, the overage may show up on more than one consecutive billing cycle, and therefore upon request, the District may adjust up to two billing cycles to assure the customer receives the most favorable adjustment. Late charges on bills approved for a leak adjustment will be waived if the customer adheres to a prearranged payment schedule. There is no cap to limit the customer's costs.*

## **Water Billing & Shut Off Procedures**

Water meters are read and Water Bills are mailed every other month

Past due notices are mailed every other month opposite the Water Bill months

Water bills indicate the "Bill Date" and "Due Date" after which the current balance becomes past due

A Late Charge of 2% or \$4.00, whichever is greater, is charged monthly on the past due amount

Accounts past due more than Sixty (60) days and greater than \$80.00 may have water service shut off

A Shut Off charge of \$50 is assessed when staff is *dispatched* to shut water off.

A Turn On charge of \$50 is assessed after service has been turned on.

Accounts past due more than Sixty (60) days and greater than \$200.00 may have a lien placed against the property.

For more information you can contact the district at [wcd7@qwestoffice.net](mailto:wcd7@qwestoffice.net) or at 360-752-9208.

Your elected commissioners for 2018  
Tom Rhone, Wendell Poole and Mark Lann

Dave Olson is the District Manager.  
Lorrie Whitfield is the Office Manager.

Your commissioners meet monthly at 5:00 p.m. at 1615 Bayon Rd., Bellingham.