WHATCOM COUNTY
WATER DISTRICT 7
BELLINGHAM, WA

Dear Valued Customer,

As your elected Water District Commissioners, we oversee the distribution and delivery of safe, clean drinking water at an affordable cost. We take this mandate seriously and are continually exploring ways to be most cost efficient and effective. You may look at the District's Water System Plan posted on our website (www.waterdistrict7.com) for more details of improvements we have made including upcoming projects we have identified to maintain and update the District's infrastructure to ensure there is adequate drinking water and fire water for fire suppression.

The Annual Water Quality Report attached is a comprehensive overview of your water. We hope you will take time to review and acquaint yourself with the water we all depend on.

In May of 2024, we informed all District customers of our long-term capital improvement plan and more specifically, the infrastructures approaching the end of their useful life. We continue to work hard to ensure the District will enjoy a safe, dependable, and sustainable supply of drinking water. The District is currently seeking funding options for the priority water main replacement capital projects as discussed in the Capital Improvement Program Update received in your billing statement in 2024. We would like to thank you and appreciate your continued support as we move forward on these projects. If you have any questions about the Water District's plan or capital projects, please contact the office.

Sincerely,

Your Water District 7 Commissioners

2024 Water Quality Report

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 2024, so you can assess for yourself how clean your water is. This report is technical in nature, and much of the language used is required by law. If you have trouble understanding the content or have questions, please contact Peg Wendling at (360)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's water, comes from Lake Whatcom. Lake Whatcom is a natural reservoir, located east of the City of Bellingham. This is where the City draws its water from 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, people who have undergone organ transplant(s), 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.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* and other microbial contaminants are available from the EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline. Drinking water, including bottled water, may be expected to contain 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 EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline at 800-426-4791.

The EPA prescribes regulations which limit the number 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 2024

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 8 sites in the water distribution system each quarter. Levels for 2024 were as follows:

- THM: Average: (all sites) 33.0 ppb; Range: 9.0 to 40.0 ppb.
- HAA: Average (all sites) 14.0 ppb; Range: 9.0 to 21.0 ppb

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

Water District 7's average disinfection by-product levels were as follows:

- THM Average 30.5 ppb; Range: 24.9 to 36.9 ppb
- HAA Average: 11.8 ppb; Range: 11.1 to 12.5 ppb

Free Chlorine Residual: Chlorine levels are monitored continuously at the water filtration plant. Over 100 distribution system samples are also analyzed each month to ensure a disinfectant residual remains in treated water on its way to our customer's homes. Of the chlorine samples collected in the distribution system, the average chlorine was .42 ppm with a range of <0.02 to 0.96 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 our customer's homes to assess the amount of corrosion occurring in home plumbing. The water sampled in the first draw of stagnant water in homes was identified as having lead solder and copper pipe. There is no lead service lines in Bellingham. Sampling will next be conducted in 2026.

*Treatment technique is a required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water. *90th percentile of samples collected.*

Lead (2023 sampling): The 90th percentile value of homes sampled showed lead at the 3-ppb level. The range of values was <1 to 7 ppb.

Copper (2023 sampling): The 90th percentile value of homes sampled was 90 ppb. The range of values was 11 to 216 ppb. No sites were above the action level.

The allowable highest 90th percentile values are as follows:

- Lead: 15 ppb
- Copper: 1300 ppb

Lead and copper are monitored every 3 years. There is no lead service lines in Bellingham. Sampling will next be conducted in 2026.

Total and Fecal Coliform Bacteria: Bellingham collects over 100 samples a month at locations throughout our water distribution system and analyzes these for coliform bacteria to ensure water purity. No more than 5% of these samples can be positive for total coliform bacteria, and none can be positive for *Escherichia coli.* Coliform bacteria was 2% positive in August and 0% positive all other months. No *Escherichia coli* was detected in 2024.

The highest allowable 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 2024.

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 2024 was 0.08 nephelometric units (NTU). Bellingham met the Department of Health's limit of 0.3 NTU requirement in 2024 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.

** 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 the 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

2024

Water System Plan

Replacing water meters was the first step in the District's water loss reduction program. The data collected from more accurate meter reading has helped the District prioritize areas of unaccounted for water. The next steps in the District's water loss reduction program will include leak detection programs and in some cases replacement of leaking water mains.

The District identified and prioritized several older water distribution mains for replacement. These mains run approximately 6,500 feet from the Britton Road/Emerald Lake Way intersection south to the Britton Booster Pump Station; south on Toad Lake Road approximately 3,600 feet just north of Hillsdale Road to Academy Road, and approximately 4,200 feet east on Academy Road from Toad Lake Road to the Academy Tank. The District is currently seeking funding for the priority water main replacement projects identified as follows:

1. Academy Road Pipe Replacement
2. Toad Lake Road Pipe Replacement
3. Summit Road Pipe Replacement

These replacement projects will continue to impact the budget over the next 10-year period and will require substantial rate and fee increases. Financing remains anticipated to come from Drinking Water State Revolving Funds (DWSRF) loans, USDA Rural Development Loans, and local funds from water revenue. Grants may be available and will be utilized whenever available to reduce the cost for consumers.

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 the 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 costs 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 as a water saving measure. Most people do not 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. However, 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.

In 2024 we purchased 4,646,255 gallons of water and delivered 4,530,280 gallons leaving about 2.5% unaccounted for, most likely due to leaks and construction.

Leak Adjustments

Customers frequently ask if they can get credit on their bill when they have a leak on their side of the meter. The District purchases all 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 Adjustment Policy" that allows for an adjustment to the rate paid for lost water due to a substantiated leak. If you find a leak and make repairs immediately, keep receipts and photographic record of the repair, and then contact the District to apply for a leak adjustment. See below for a summary of the District's 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 adjustments will be made for a loss of 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, we will attempt to notify the occupant or property owner (phone #'s 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 than 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 adjusted 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 billed 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 4% or $10, whichever is greater, is billed monthly on the past due amount. Accounts past due more than sixty (60) days and greater than $80 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 may have a lien placed against the property. For more information, you can contact the District at office@waterdistrict7.com or at 360-752-9208.

Smart Watering Schedule

We suggest customers limit watering to the following schedule to help reduce stress on the City's drinking water supply from June 1st to September 15th annually:

- Odd numbered street addresses water only on Wednesdays, Fridays, and/or Sundays.
- Even numbered street addresses water only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and/or Saturdays.
- No outdoor watering on Mondays to allow the City's reservoirs to recharge.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Odd	No Watering	Even	Odd	Even	Odd	Even

Your elected Commissioners for 2025:

Mark Lann

George Kaas

Tessa Ebbesen

Your monthly Commissioners’ meeting is on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 5:00 p.m. at our office located at the following address:

601 Northshore Drive, Suite #101
Bellingham, WA 98226

Dave Olson - Operations Manager and Deanna Dobbs - Office Manager