



News Release

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[Ecology approves Cascade Water Alliance water rights](#)

Lake Tapps decision protects fisheries, lake levels and secures future water supply

OLYMPIA – With today’s state approval of a water rights package, a long-term source of drinking water is now assured for communities in eastern King County. The decision also guarantees summer recreation levels for one of Pierce County’s most popular lakes and robust flows in the White River that support healthy habitat and salmon runs while improving the river’s water quality.

The [Washington Department of Ecology’s \(Ecology\) approval](#) gives Cascade Water Alliance (Cascade) authority to use a portion of water in Lake Tapps as a future drinking water source. This will be the first regional water supply to come on line in the Puget Sound area in many years.

“The work to decide who gets to use the public’s water is some of the most difficult we face at Ecology,” said Ted Sturdevant, Ecology’s director. “I believe we’ve struck the right balance with this decision. The key interests of each party have been preserved, reflecting the art of compromise necessary for good water decisions. It’s an approach we could use more of to ensure we have a water smart future for Washington.”

Pierce Councilman Shawn Bunney, who along with State Rep. Chris Hurst, has been actively involved in negotiations said, "Although the devils always in the details, I think we have a good proposal and am pleased that we may soon see a successful end to this process that has now lasted over a decade. It will be great for the citizens of Lake Tapps to get on with their lives and the region to have a water supply that will support jobs for decades to come."

Cascade is a consortium of eight municipalities and provides drinking water to nearly 400,000 residences and more than 22,000 businesses in eastern King County.

The finalization of these rights completes a decade-long effort to identify and develop a way to preserve the Lake Tapps reservoir from drying up.

Lake Tapps is a reservoir created in 1911 as part of a hydroelectric project on the White River. When Puget Sound Energy announced in 1999 it might not have the ability to continue operating the system, concerns arose about the lake’s future. Lake Tapps community homeowners and others who enjoy the lake were particularly worried about maintaining appropriate lake levels for swimming, boating and other recreational activities.

Proposals emerged in the early 2000s to save the lake by turning it into a drinking water supply. Puget Sound Energy ended the hydroelectric operations in 2004 but agreed to keep the

Lake Tapps ROE decision

lake filled while negotiations to sell the lake were ongoing. Cascade purchased Lake Tapps from Puget Sound Energy in December 2009.

The work to secure four new water rights and to transfer another has been a lengthy and complex process, requiring thorough environmental scrutiny. It involved negotiations with many stakeholders, including Cascade, the Muckleshoot and Puyallup Tribes, the Lake Tapps Community Council and four other neighboring cities.

State Representative Christopher Hurst said, "I would like to see the fine print, but it seems that we are finally at the end of this long journey with an agreement which protects the lake, citizens of Lake Tapps, fish and a regional water supply for the future. This successful conclusion has been a long time in the making and I am very happy for the Lake Tapps folks."

Ecology's decision gives Cascade the right to eventually divert up to 48 million gallons of water daily from Lake Tapps to serve its customers. Cascade agreed to prioritize specific flows in the White River and summer recreation levels in Lake Tapps ahead of taking water for municipal use.

Cascade doesn't plan to develop this regional water supply for decades, and will still have to build water treatment and delivery systems.

Chuck Clarke, Cascade's chief executive officer, said: "Cascade would like to commend the Department of Ecology for producing a document that reflects a regional partnership with Tribes, the four neighboring cities, the Lake Tapps homeowners and the state to ensure we can provide water today and well into the future."

Ecology's decision is final pending any appeals which must be filed within the next 30 days.

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For more information:

Lake Tapps water rights documents:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/swro/lktappshome.html>

Cascade Water Alliance: http://www.cascadewater.org/lake_tapps_overview.php

Broadcast version

Communities in eastern King County now have a new source of drinking water. The state Department of Ecology today gave Cascade Water Alliance the rights to use Lake Tapps as a drinking water reservoir.

Lake Tapps ROE decision

The decision requires certain flows in the White River and prioritizes summer recreational use of Lake Tapps ahead of drinking water supplies. These were key negotiations Cascade agreed to with the Tribes and the Lake Tapps community.

The decision wraps up a decade-long effort to preserve the man-made Pierce County lake. It was created by Puget Sound Energy in 1911 as a hydroelectric generation system on the White River. In 2004 PSE ceased generating electricity but agreed to the lake filled.

Cascade purchased the lake in 2009. The package of water rights gives Cascade the ability to divert up to 48 million gallons of water daily from the reservoir to supply homes and businesses.

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