



Message From the Chair

October 22, 2009

As a native of Western Washington I remember many summers praying for at least one good week of hot weather. As the fall rains arrive I can't remember a longer and hotter summer than the one we just enjoyed. We've had almost no rain since May and temperatures topping 100 degrees.

So why no water shortages similar to those we experienced a decade ago? While growth in the region has slowed there are still more people and businesses than when we endured mandatory water restrictions. No major new supply sources have been added to the region since Tacoma finished its Second Supply pipeline from the Green River in 2002. So shouldn't we have had water restrictions somewhere?

Looking across the region, water demands are lower everywhere. I am not aware of any city or water district that set a new peak day water record this summer. The highest peak usage day on the Sammamish Plateau was in 2003, long before rapid growth slowed. There are a number of factors that have contributed to the regional and national trend toward lower water usage despite growing population:

- People get the message. For the last 20 years we have spent considerable energy educating people and businesses about using water wisely. Clean water is a precious resource for people and the environment. I think we get it. It's now OK to let the lawn go brown and not feel guilty. Kids tell their parents to turn off the water when they are brushing their teeth.
- Conservation programs work. Plumbing code changes to limit toilets to 1.6 gallons per flush were instituted 20 years ago. This past year Cascade has issued over 3,000 rebates for those purchasing water efficient clothes washers. Water audits have led to more efficient irrigation (sprinkler) systems. Land use codes have encouraged water saving landscaping practices. Over time these types of programs have added up to big water savings.

Water for today...
and tomorrow



- It's expensive to keep that lawn green. The cost to collect, store, treat, and deliver water has increased over time. Water is cleaner and safer than ever before, but that has come with additional costs. In addition, most water utilities have instituted rate structures that encourage people to be more efficient with water, especially in the summer.

So what does this all mean? As Cascade works through its 2010 update to our long range Transmission and Supply Plan, we recognize there is greater uncertainty in the future. We expect per capita demands to continue to decline, but to what level is unknown. Additional water supplies will be developed in the future, but may be needed later rather than sooner.

Historically, we have added major new regional supplies that have met water demands for decades. These are billion dollar investments. If constructed too soon water customers will be paying higher rates for facilities that are not yet needed. A major water project like Lake Tapps will be needed sometime in the future. Having the project available allows Cascade to develop interim strategies utilizing existing or smaller water supplies that will more closely meet demands. Such a strategy allows greater flexibility to time investments, makes more efficient use of current water supplies and facilities in the region, and will help keep water costs lower. Several decades from now when the Lake Tapps treatment facilities and transmission pipelines are built, it will be a major water supply needed by the entire region.



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