



## 'A new beginning' for Lake Tapps

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By Mike Archbold

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Water: Manager says he'll relay residents', users' concerns to owner

The new blue doors and canvas awning on the administration building next to the old Lake Tapps power plant herald a new era in the lake's nearly 100-year history.

Joe Mickelson is part of that new look and era.

The 30-year veteran of Seattle's water department is Lake Tapps' first manager and will become the local face of the lake's new owner, the King County-based Cascade Water Alliance.

"It's a new beginning," Mickelson said last week. "We want to be good new owners. We want to be responsible and be fair."

In his new job, Mickelson will oversee maintenance of the lake, its system of dikes and the flume that brings White River water to the lake. He will interact with lake residents and lake users.

"I understand what the community concerns are and can relay them to" Cascade's officials, he said.

Lake Tapps residents have complained about a lack of communication with Cascade ever since the coalition of King County governments bought the lake from Puget Sound Energy in 2001.



Joe Mickelson, the new manager of Lake Tapps for Cascade Water Alliance, says the new owners "want to be responsible and fair." He says he understands the community concerns and will relay them to Cascade.

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and tomorrow



For nine years Cascade, 2,000 lakeside residents, two Indian tribes and the four cities near the lake wrangled over how much water each should get from the White River. The river feeds Lake Tapps, which was created as a reservoir for hydroelectric power.

Lately, threats of court action have subsided and agreements have been put in place to protect fish in the river and recreation on the lake.

Mickelson and Cascade are expected to continue that trend.

"He has been very good, very responsive," said Leon Stucki, a member of the Lake Tapps Community Council and the representative of the Snag Island area. Stucki said he recently e-mailed Cascade, noting that the level of the lake had dropped below that agreed to with the council.

"They paid attention real fast," he said.

Auburn Mayor Pete Lewis credited Cascade's Chuck Clarke for helping to end the turmoil. Clarke, a former head of the state Department of Ecology, was hired a year ago to run the alliance.

"What he really did was a great job of allowing their board to understand why our cities felt so affected" by the sale of the lake, he said last week.

And now the lake is protected, he said. It eventually will be a regional source of drinking water, though Cascade isn't expected to draw water from the lake until at least 2050.

On Friday, more than 100 people were invited to the Lake Tapps powerhouse for a signing of papers transferring ownership of the lake from PSE to Cascade. Lewis said holding the signing at Lake Tapps instead of in Bellevue, where the two companies are based, illustrates the change Clarke has brought at Cascade.

On Wednesday, Cascade will host an open house at North Tapps Middle School for residents to hear its

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plans for the future of the lake. Cascade also has established a free information number – 1-877-299-0930 – for residents to get lake information and report problems.

Mickelson, a boater for 30 years, lives near Mill Creek. He said he and his wife are talking about moving to the lake but have no firm plans yet.

He said the goal is to start refilling the lake as soon as Feb. 15 for the coming recreation season and, weather permitting, have the lake up to its recreational level of 542.2 feet and 543.7 feet above sea level by April 15.

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