



Something for everyone in Lake Tapps water deal

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Lake Tapps has long been a regional recreation asset; now a pending water-rights package could help cement its status as a truly regional water supply.

The state Department of Ecology announced plans last week to allow a consortium of King County cities and water districts to use the 99-year-old man-made lake as a source of drinking water.



Pierce County communities would benefit too.

In addition to assurances that the lake's boaters and homeowners won't be left high and dry, surrounding cities would gain a well-connected partner to help them meet their own water needs.

That partner is Cascade Water Alliance, which bought the lake from Puget Sound Energy last year as hedge against growth in eastern King County.

The alliance includes the cities of Bellevue, Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond and Tukwila, and the Covington, Skyway and Sammamish Plateau water and sewer districts.

Cascade's purchase capped a decade of uncertainty over what would become of the lake after PSE announced plans to close the White River hydroelectric project that feeds the reservoir.

The consortium doesn't plan to draw water out of Lake Tapps for years, but its early negotiations had prompted concerns that maintaining summer lake levels would not be a priority.

Water for today...
and tomorrow



The lakeside communities of Bonney Lake, Buckley, Sumner and Auburn also worried that there would be nothing left to tap when they need new water sources in the coming decades.

In securing water rights from the state, Cascade has agreed to not take water between April and September if diversions would harm fish runs or recreation. It also has promised to reserve water to help the nearby cities meet their water needs over the next 50 years.

That promise was made possible by Cascade's reevaluation of its own water needs. As conservation succeeds in tamping down new demand, scarce resources can be put to better – and wider – use.

All involved – Cascade, the cities and the Lake Tapps community – deserve credit for working diligently and constructively toward a solution that not just preserves the lake, but also puts it to work for the entire region.

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