



Lake Tapps, for fish, cities, fun

The Seattle Times

September 20, 2010 at 9:18 AM

The state Department of Ecology approved plans by Cascade Water Alliance to use Lake Tapps in Pierce County as a source of drinking water. The deal will also protect salmon and maintain a beautiful recreational site.

The state Department of Ecology put an exclamation point on plans to use Lake Tapps to satisfy a growing region's future needs for drinking water and outdoor recreation.

Last week DOE approved a mix of uses crafted by the Eastside's Cascade Water Alliance to identify and preserve Lake Tapps, south of Auburn in Pierce County, for municipal water supplies out to 2060. The cities of Auburn, Bonney Lake, Buckley and Sumner have a 50-year horizon for adequate drinking water.

Cascade Water Alliance is a consortium of eight municipalities and three water districts, which serve more than 370,000 residents and 22,000 businesses, nearly half of the retail water service in King County outside Seattle.

Smart reuse of a reservoir created a century ago to power a hydroelectric dam means balancing competing interests, and the management of their unique elements.

The state granted Cascade the right to eventually divert up to 48 million gallons of water a day from Lake Tapps, if Cascade agreed to prioritize flows of the White River for salmon runs, and maintain summer water levels for summer recreation.

Cascade is managing outcomes for thirsty cities, tribal interests and adjacent homeowners. A decade of negotiations preceded the pursuit of the state's endorsement.

For all of the good news in DOE's approval, the glass is only half full for Cascade, which will have to build treatment facilities and delivery systems.

Someone will have to remind future generations of incredulous water skiers of how the decision to turn Lake Tapps into a source of drinking water helped save a glorious recreational site and real-estate amenity.

Water for today...
and tomorrow