

## EASTSOUND WATER USERS ASSOCIATION: BUILDING EFFICIENCIES IN OPERATIONS

Every water system consists of source water, equipment, and people. Each system is unique in its operations and management. A year and a half ago, Dan Burke assumed the general managership at Eastsound Water Users Association (Eastsound) on Orcas Island in San Juan County. Coming from San Francisco with experience in internet startups, Dan envisioned using technology to address operational and managerial challenges. Following last year's chlorine supply issues, Dan used statistical analysis to evaluate chlorine use and realized it was time for a change. Dan convinced the board of directors to invest in an onsite chlorine generator. The system now generates low-cost chlorine for its disinfection needs, which cushions them from supply chain issues. When Eastsound pays off the equipment, future costs due to ferry delays or off-island purchases are minimized.



Sam Prado, operations manager, watches as operator Michelle Campbell points to Eastsound equipment.



Operator certificates displayed at Eastsound's newly remodeled front counter.

Eastsound's successful system of advanced analytics metering allows customers to monitor their own water use online in real time. Dan built upon the automated control system to manage night operations and chlorine dosing. This reduced operators' daytime workload, providing time for operational improvements. With these added efficiencies, Eastsound now has operation and maintenance agreements with two other small surface water systems on the island.

Historically, job postings at Eastsound brought few candidates. The island's high cost of living and remote setting discouraged candidates from the mainland. The previous manager and lead operator developed a one-month, twenty-hour original training program. Thirteen local candidates, many with no prior water experience, were introduced to the basics of water treatment and operation. Out of this program they identified several individuals who are now operators on the island. Continuing this success, Dan secured from the board increases to wage and health care benefits, provided retirement planning, and completely remodeled the office space. Eastsound increased the culture of open dialogue and knowledge-sharing transforming it into a collaborative model. Currently, multiple candidates vie for open positions.

To meet the Water Use Efficiency (WUE) 2017 metering deadline, Eastsound installed meters throughout the distribution system and on all customer service connections to track and detect where the system was losing water. In 2021, using this metering information, operators reduced distribution system leakage from 8.5 percent to 2.7 percent. This helped them meet mandatory WUE requirements and reduced costs. Fewer leaks mean fewer emergencies when water supplies are scarce, especially during summer months when it rains less, and user demands are highest.

Embracing change is heady stuff; congratulations to Dan Burke and Eastsound for their continued success in providing safe and reliable drinking water.

## 2022 DRINKING WATER WEEK WINNERS

We celebrate National Drinking Water Week annually during the first full week of May. [Congratulations to our 2022 Award Winners!](#)



## DRINKING WATER STATE REVOLVING FUND

New federal funding through the [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(BIL\)](#) provides increased funding over the next five years. Visit our [DWSRF webpage](#) for more information.

### DWSRF Deadlines

**June 3:** Comment on the DWSRF [Intended Use Plan \(IUP\)](#).

**May 25:** [Consolidation Feasibility Study Grant \(CFSG\)](#) program overview webinar.

**June 15:** CFSG Follow-up Q&A session.

**June 1-30:** CFSG applications due.

### As long as we're talking about deadlines...

**Before July 1:** [Consumer Confidence Reports](#).

**July 1:** [Water Use Efficiency Reports](#).

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE GRANTS

You can now opt-in to the customer assistance grant program funded by the legislature this year. It's run by the Department of Commerce, with a **deadline of May 27**. Learn more on their [Grants to Utilities for Residential Customer Arrearages website](#).

## WATER LAW 101

The Department of Ecology produced a series of podcasts explaining water rights laws. Listen to the podcast or read the transcript.

[Water Law 101: Episode 1—What is a water right?](#)

[Water Law 101: Episode 2—Why is getting a water right so hard?](#)

[Water Law 101: Episode 3—The balancing act of water management.](#)



## MARKETING RESOURCES FOR WATER SYSTEMS

We know the value of water because we work in drinking water. However, getting the message to customers is not always easy. We can help! Visit our [Water System Marketing Resources webpage](#) for bill stuffers and brochures that you can print yourself, send to professional printers, or order for FREE.

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