



NOVEMBER 2025



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Notable Dates

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Connections

[The Office of Drinking Water Newsletter](#)

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Rethinking Yakima

HOW RECLAIMED WATER AND ON-SITE REUSE CAN COMPLETE THE WATER MANAGEMENT PUZZLE

As we look at the Yakima Basin's water challenges through a new lens, there's a key piece of the puzzle that's often missing from the conversation: the potential of reclaimed water and on-site non-potable reuse. While the headlines have often centered on curtailment and traditional storage, we have a remarkable opportunity to broaden the toolkit. After all, Washington State has a mandate under RCW 90.46 to explore exactly these kinds of solutions—and yet, they haven't been front and center in recent basin discussions.

Let's put it simply: reclaimed water and on-site non-potable water systems—treating and reusing water within a building or development—are powerful tools we've yet to fully tap into. During past debates—like those around the Hirst decision—on-site reuse wasn't widely considered as a way to allow development to continue sustainably. And similarly, in the current Yakima Basin conversation, these approaches haven't been highlighted—even though they fit perfectly within our state's own regulatory framework and our need to adapt to climate change.

So, what if we changed that narrative? What if the Yakima experience became the turning point where we said, "*here's our chance to truly embrace the tools we've had all along*"? By bringing reclaimed water and on-site reuse into the discussion, we can help water systems in water-scarce areas think more holistically. It's about seeing that we have a mandate in RCW 90.46 to make use of these approaches, and we just haven't fully tapped into them yet.

And yes, we can certainly be aspirational and even think about the numbers. Imagine quantifying how much potable water could be preserved if buildings in water-stressed communities reused greywater on-site for non-potable purposes. Or consider the synergy with water banking: when we free up potable supplies, we create more flexibility for everyone.

In the end, it's about turning a challenge into an opportunity. The Yakima Basin can inspire us to weave these often-overlooked solutions into the fabric of our integrated water plans. It's a future where every drop is valued, every tool is considered, and our water systems are ready for whatever the climate may bring. 💧



Water Rights and Project Viability

When designing a new water system or expanding existing system, consultants often consider physical infrastructure and cost as the most important considerations. Often overlooked is whether there is **legal right** to use water for meeting customer demand. If a water system does not have legal right to use water, regardless of whether it can be physically pumped out of the ground, we cannot approve the new or expanded water system.

As one of the first steps in evaluating new systems, consolidation of multiple water systems, or water system expansion, the design engineer should check on the legal status of any water right permit, claim, or certificate with the Department of Ecology (Ecology). Common unanticipated issues that may arise are:

- ◆ A certificated water right has not been used for over five years and is not protected from relinquishment.
- ◆ The purpose of water use specified on a water right is not for municipal or residential use.
- ◆ The water system intends to use an exempt well, but they do not meet the criteria for exempt use.
- ◆ The water right is not additive, so it does not add to the overall source capacity.
- ◆ The water right can only be used during certain times of year (usually the winter), which means it may not be useful for accommodating growth.

Engineering project submittals that require a water right evaluation by Ecology include source approvals, intertie approvals, non-transient non-community system approvals, and requests to increase approved connections through infill. All planning documents (Water System Plans and Small Water System Management Programs) require a water right evaluation; this includes new community water systems and water system expansions.

For consultation about water rights, we recommend reaching out to Ecology's regional office serving your area. Contact information can be found at [Water Rights Search—Washington State Department of Ecology](#). ◆



UW Climate Impacts Group PNW Water Year 2025 Survey

Happy 2026 Water Year! The University of Washington Climate Impacts Group, Washington State Climate Office, Oregon State University Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, and Oregon Climate Service is asking for your



participation in helping us document weather and climate impacts of the 2025 water year (October 1, 2024-September 30, 2025) for the Pacific Northwest (Washington, Oregon, and Idaho). This **anonymous** survey asks about impacts and response actions that were implemented during the 2025 water year by sector due to either abnormally dry or abnormally wet conditions.

In addition to collecting impact information, the survey asks a few feedback questions on other aspects of this project, such as the [PNW Water Year Impacts Assessment](#) and the [Water Year Meetings](#). The [survey](#) should take about 15-20 minutes to complete and will be open through Wednesday, November 26, 2025. **Your responses are vital** for informing the [PNW Water Year Impacts Assessment](#) and we greatly appreciate your contributions!

We greatly appreciate your contributions! [Here is the link to complete the PNW Water Year 2025 Impacts Survey](#). ◆

AWOP Team Attends Training and Tours Kennewick

The Area Wide Optimization Program (AWOP) is a voluntary partnership supported by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that helps multiple states and regions improve drinking water quality. Through training and technical assistance, EPA and its training partners provide tools and strategies to help water systems get the best performance from their existing treatment processes. The goal is simple: to help operators deliver the highest quality drinking water possible.

In August, staff from our office joined a workshop in Kennewick with representatives from EPA Regions 8 and 10, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and EPA's consulting team, [Process Applications, Inc. \(PAI\)](#).

The workshop focused on how to manage harmful algal blooms (HAB)—an emerging water quality challenge that can affect drinking water sources. Participants learned about the City of Kennewick's approach to treating HABs at its membrane water treatment plant. The city uses NaMnO₄ (sodium permanganate) to remove algae and reduce taste and odor issues.

Our participation in AWOP helps strengthen our technical expertise and supports continuous improvement in drinking water treatment across Washington. With climate change and warming water temperatures, HABs are becoming a potential concern at many surface water treatment plants (WTP). PAI provided a presentation on different ways water systems can oxidize HAB, watched an operator do a different technique of a chemical drawdown, and set up three jar test stations to compare results for the best NaMnO₄ dosing. These exercises can be replicated by our staff with treatment plant operators to help them be ready to respond to a HABs event.

To wrap up the workshop, special topics were gathered from each region. These special topics included:

- ◆ Cybersecurity preparation, including manually operating a WTP if the SCADA (Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition) computer was affected by malware,
- ◆ "Facility Based Training" from Montana DEQ, which provides CEUs to operators at their own WTP.

Below is a group photo from the WTP tour. 💧



From left to right, standing: Mike Kropp (MT), Andres Cervantes (DOH), Laura McLaughlin (DOH), Jake Crosby (EPA R8), Arnica Briody (DOH), Tom Waters (EPA-TSB), Josh Seekins (MT), Jolyn Leslie (DOH), Caitlin Bates (EPA R10), Lupe Gonzales (DOH), Gerard Gernand (MT), Justin Koehler (MT), Chris Affeldt (EPA R10). Left to right kneeling: Larry DeMers (PAI), Jeff Johnson (DOH)



Drinking Water Week Awards 2026

Drinking Water Week will be here before you know it! Next year it's May 3-9. The [nomination form is open](#) now until February 16, 2026. If you know someone in the drinking water industry who has done an outstanding job, overcome a challenge, or is retiring after a long career, tell us their story and nominate them for an award! If you're proud of what your water system has accomplished in the last year—[submit a nomination form](#) and tell us what they've done.

You can [read about past winners](#) to get an idea of others' award-winning accomplishments.

[Fill out a nomination form today!](#) 💧

Current DWSRF Funding Cycle

Funding is available! We're inviting water systems to apply for consolidation feasibility studies, planning and engineering (preconstruction), and construction project funding through our Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF). The current funding cycle ends November 30. We will pull and review applications beginning December 1. You can find more details on our [DWSRF webpage](#). We estimate that we'll have approximately \$150 million in funding available for the current funding cycle, with significant amounts of subsidy available for systems that qualify as [disadvantaged communities](#).

Updated Guidelines

We updated the guidelines related to each funding program. The updated guidelines regulate the applications received during the current funding cycle. You can find the guidelines on our [DWSRF webpage](#). Submit comments to dwsrf@doh.wa.gov.

Free Technical Assistance

Fill out our online [technical assistance request form](#) to ask for FREE technical assistance. We explain more in this [technical assistance flyer](#), or contact [Sam Delmer](#), DWSRF Technical Assistance Coordinator. We assign and use our free technical assistance to help small and disadvantaged system that face technical, managerial, or fiscal challenges in meeting regulatory requirements, undertaking system planning, or accessing DWSRF funding for planning or construction projects.

Webinar Resources

We recently held several workshops around the state to provide additional outreach and education regarding the funding programs. More information, as well as the presentations given at the workshops, are available on our [DWSRF webpage](#).

Emerging Contaminants

We remain committed to identifying and addressing emerging contaminants statewide. Funding and technical assistance are available through the Alternative Drinking Water and the Emerging Contaminants for Small and Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) grant programs. Funding assistance provides for:

- ◆ Sampling and testing.
- ◆ Technical assistance and planning grants.
- ◆ Long-term remediation projects.

You can find more information on the [Alternative Drinking Water webpage](#) or the [EC-SDC Program Guidelines 331-765 \(PDF\)](#).

For any additional information or questions about the DWSRF program, please contact [Chris Pettit](#), DWSRF Program Manager, or call 564-233-1408. 💧



Funding Reminders

Application deadline for this funding cycle is November 30 at 11:59 pm.

Key Things to Know

- ◆ If you have never applied before, please create a profile at [Secure Access](#) and add Washington Loan Tracking (WALT) as a service. You can find details in our [WALT External User Guide 331-614 \(PDF\)](#).

- ◆ If you need Technical Assistance with application preparation or would like to be invited for Emerging Contaminants funding as a Small Disadvantaged Community, please fill out our free [Technical Assistance Request online form](#).



- ◆ Answer everything. Any missing information or unanswered

questions may make you ineligible or delay contract creation!

- ◆ Have your Federal Tax ID number ready, along with your Unique Identifier Number, State VIN number, and UBI number by the time of contract generation. For more information, contact dwsrf@doh.wa.gov.
- ◆ When the application asks for Census Tracts, please crop your water system service area in the county maps provided in the application, if possible.
- ◆ Always click Save Draft in WALT! Backing out of some windows can cause you to lose work.

For any further issues or questions with your DWSRF application in WALT or assistance with multiple users accessing applications, please contact dwsrf@doh.wa.gov, 360 867-3991. 💧

Cultural and Environmental Reviews—DWSRF Info Continued...

When applying for a DWSRF loan, applicants must comply with several program requirements. Two important, but lesser-known requirements are the:

- ◆ Environmental Review.
- ◆ Cultural Resource Review.

Both are mandated by Federal Regulations that govern the DWSRF program. You are not required to complete the reviews before submitting your loan application.

Environmental Review Process

All projects receiving DWSRF funding must undergo an Environmental Review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). Passed into law in 1971, SEPA works to prevent and minimize environmental damage within the state while improving the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives here. SEPA establishes a review process that helps municipal entities evaluate proposed projects and determine any potential environmental impacts, using the best available scientific information. There are two determination categories:

- ◆ Determination of Nonsignificance
- ◆ Determination of Significance.

Certain project types are also identified by statute as “categorically exempt” from SEPA review, because they are considered unlikely to cause environmental harm. Completion of the SEPA process is part of the preconstruction review process for all DWSRF-funded loans.

For more information on SEPA, please visit the [Department of Ecology's SEPA website](#).

Cultural Review Process

A Cultural Resource Review is used to identify and assess the potential effects of a project on prehistoric and historic cultural resources. A cultural resource is any physical evidence of past human activity that is significant to a culture, such as archaeological sites and historic buildings, landscapes, and objects. These resources are

considered non-renewable and provide insight into human history, traditions, and interaction with the environment. Examples include historic structures, archaeological artifacts, shipwrecks, and places with traditional or religious significance.

Section 106 Review

All DWSRF-funded projects are required to undergo a Section 106 Review, as required under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This process is outlined in Section 106 of the NHPA and requires us to consider a project's effects on cultural resources. It ensures that preservation values are factored into the project's planning and decision-making process. We are required to:

- ◆ Identify any cultural resources in the project area,
- ◆ Assess any impacts of the project on those cultural resources,
- ◆ Consult with Native American Tribes and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) about the impacts, and,
- ◆ Resolve any adverse effects to cultural resources that may occur due to the project.

We cannot accept a review conducted under Governor's Executive Order 21-02 as we must conduct a federal level Section 106 review.

Required Form

Although we conduct Section 106 Reviews on behalf of loan recipients, applicants are responsible for providing the necessary project information to start the review. Applicants must complete and submit a [DAHP Section 106 EZ/Project Review form](#) with their application. When completing the form, please take care to provide the most accurate and complete information available and include any maps or construction drawings you may have.

For questions regarding the Environmental or Cultural Reviews, please reach out to [Scott Kugel](#), Cultural and Environmental Program Specialist. ◆

Drinking Water Advisory Group (DWAG) December 1, 2025, Meeting

We hold all our meetings through Microsoft Teams video, so you can join our meeting with your computer, laptop, tablet, or phone from wherever you are. **You can find the Teams links and meeting agenda on our [DWAG Meeting webpage](#).** After the meeting we post any handouts or presentations and, within a month, we post the meeting notes.

Do you want to receive advance notice of meetings and their agendas? [Join our advisory group email list](#).

Do you have questions or topics you want to discuss? Email [John Freitag](#) or DWInfo@doh.wa.gov with your ideas and questions. ◆

Water Conservation

The recent drought-driven historic water use curtailments in the Yakima Basin are a reminder of the importance of water conservation. It's important to educate your customers and engage your community in efforts to conserve water. Wise water use is what you can do every day. It's about using the water you need, but not more.

The Voluntary Approach

- ◆ **Insert educational fliers in utility bills.** Water conservation ideas for homeowners can be found at the [Alliance for Water Efficiency's website](#). We have statement inserts/bill stuffers available for your use. You can order them for free in our [publications database](#) (use the publication number) or print them yourselves.
 - [Indoor Water Conservation 331-120-1 \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Outdoor Water conservation 331-120-2 \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Lawn Watering 331-120-3 \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Indoor Water Audit 331-120-4 \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Meter Reading and Leak Repair 331-120-5 \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Soil Preparation and Planning 331-120-6 \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Irrigation and Landscaping 331-120-7 \(PDF\)](#)
- ◆ **Send a letter to customers**, post information on your website, use social media, or conduct interviews on local radio stations.
- ◆ **Educate owners** about sprinkler systems, their maintenance needs, and ways to adjust operations as landscaping matures.
- ◆ **Ask pool owners** to refill pools less often.
- ◆ **Ask people using water** for outdoor play to minimize time with hoses left running.
- ◆ **Offer gardeners and plant nurseries** education on ways to reduce water loss, such as mulching and soil improvements.

Need to go a bit further? Consider these ideas to conserve water supplies and reduce demand.

- ◆ **Match increased water use with higher prices.** Institute inclining block water rates, setting a base charge for necessary domestic uses and stepping up the price for outdoor water use. This can discourage water waste and nonessential irrigation, and make people aware that higher water use has a cost.
- ◆ **Institute an even/odd schedule** for lawn and garden watering. This can include a day of no watering, which benefits the water system.
- ◆ **Require residents to limit lawn irrigation** to early or late hours. Ask neighboring water systems what they're doing and share your ideas.

Other Ideas to Highlight

- ◆ **Prepare a water shortage response plan.** Thinking ahead and developing a plan can help tremendously when problems arise.
 - [Summary of how to prepare a Water Shortage Response Plan \(PDF\)](#)
 - [Detailed guidance and templates on how to prepare a Water Shortage Response Plan](#), which may help you qualify for drought-related financial assistance programs if needed.

Think Outside the Reservoir

Perhaps the most enlightened and forward-thinking way to reduce the demands on our potable water supplies is reclaimed water and on-site non-potable water systems—treating and reusing water within a building or development. These are powerful tools that we as a state have yet to fully tap into. 💧



Backflow Assembly Tester Professional Growth Reminder!

A Backflow Assembly Tester (BAT) certification is required to test and inspect all backflow assemblies in Washington State. Certified BATs are an essential part of the community that keeps our drinking water safe and reliable. We have a three-year professional growth requirement to ensure BATs are qualified to perform this vital task.

Those BATs with a December 31, 2025, professional growth deadline must fulfil their requirement by taking and passing a professional growth exam.

The BAT Program is administered by Washington Certification Services (WCS), and they manage all exams, certifications, renewals, and professional growth requirements. You can visit the [WCS website](#) any time to:

- ◆ Verify your deadline.
- ◆ Schedule an exam.

BATs can take their professional growth exam any time during the three-year professional growth time frame. We always recommend BATs complete the exam in the first or second year rather than waiting until final year; however,

many BAT wait until the last few months. In previous years, WCS offered professional growth exams through the end of December to meet high demand. This is no longer the case, and WCS will not offer any BAT practical exams after December 15. The final practical exam this year will be offered on December 13, 2025. If you wait until December and do not pass on your first attempt, you may not have time to re-register before the application deadline.

If you (or someone you know) has a professional growth deadline on December 31, 2025, visit the [WCS website](#) and schedule your exam as soon as possible.

Do not wait, avoid the end of year rush, and ensure you maintain your certification! ◆



We Have a New Webpage: Waterworks Operator Job Postings

To better serve waterworks operators and drinking water utilities, we provide job posts for drinking water systems that are either hiring for a vacant position or interested in hiring entry-level operators.

This furthers our mission to assist our partners in providing safe and reliable drinking water. The best way to do that is by helping water systems and water operation organizations keep fully staffed with certified waterworks operators.

Visit the new [Waterworks Operator Job Postings webpage](#). You'll find instructions for:

- ◆ Water systems looking for certified operators.
- ◆ How to apply for a listed position and how to find certification information.
- ◆ Current job announcements.

Email dwopcert@doh.wa.gov with any other questions. ◆

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