



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of White Salmon Elevates Water Alert to Stage 4 – Extreme Water Shortage

WHITE SALMON, WA – The City of White Salmon has elevated its water conservation alert to Stage 4 – Extreme Water Shortage, effective immediately for the Strawberry Mountain Pressure Zone (see corresponding boundary map). While a Stage 1 alert was put in place for the affected area of town following the City’s emergency declaration on June 3, this escalation is being made proactively to prevent further system strain and protect public health.

The updated alert follows a weekend incident in which high water uses in the affected pressure zone led to a substantial drop in the Strawberry Mountain Reservoir, triggering a manual refill of treated city water using sanitized fire tankers and activating a four-day boil water notice. This escalation to Stage 4 aims to prevent a repeat of that scenario while one of the two pumps at the Los Altos Pump station remains offline.

“Despite our earlier alert, water usage in the impacted area remained high enough to draw the reservoir down to critical levels,” said Mayor Marla Keethler. “We’re now taking the necessary step to significantly limit water use so we can maintain sufficient supply for drinking water, indoor use, and emergency preparedness.”

This action is being implemented under the City’s Water Shortage Emergency Regulations (Ordinance 2022-09-1111) and aligns with the emergency authority granted under the Emergency Proclamation 2025-001 issued last month when the pump failure was discovered during routine maintenance.

The following Stage 4 restrictions are in effect until further notice:

- **Water use is limited to human consumption and essential indoor purposes only.**
- **All irrigation** (lawns, gardens, orchards) is prohibited.
- **Vehicle washing** is prohibited, except for essential maintenance on commercial/industrial property. Licensed car washes may continue operating.
- **Flushing of sidewalks, driveways, etc.** is prohibited.
- **Filling of pools, wading pools, and hot tubs** is prohibited.
- **No outdoor water use is permitted** under any circumstances.

Background and Community Questions

The pump failure at the Los Altos Reservoir—discovered during scheduled maintenance—immediately jeopardized the system’s ability to move water from Buck Creek into the Strawberry Mountain Reservoir and onward to city water users. Replacement parts are currently being fabricated. In the meantime, conservation remains essential to avoiding further service disruptions.

In response to community questions, the City offers the following clarifications:

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- **Why wasn't a temporary pump installed?**

The pump system is highly specific to White Salmon's hydraulic conditions. Temporary solutions would require reengineering and Department of Health approval, which would have delayed restoration longer than pursuing custom replacement parts.

- **Is fire protection still available?**

Yes. WKRFA remains in close coordination with the City, and fire response plans rely on alternate reservoirs and direct system access to ensure readiness.

- **Why are we still being billed?**

State law requires water systems to maintain base rates to cover fixed costs such as staffing, infrastructure maintenance, and regulatory compliance—even during boil notices or usage restrictions.

- **What's the City doing long-term?**

The City's 2024-approved Water System Plan outlines a comprehensive upgrade path. So far approximately \$20M has been secured to modernize the mainline system delivery water into town. Additional project to improve delivery in the affected area include installation of the North Main booster pump station to create a new pressure zone, and plans for an aquifer storage recovery system, which previously secured \$1.6 million in federal funding before being rescinded in the 2025 budget approved by the federal government this past spring.

- **Does this affect new development?**

No new development can proceed in the impacted pressure zone without meeting strict infrastructure requirements. New projects, such as the Spring Street development, will be served by an entirely separate pressure system currently under construction.

A Community Effort

"We're asking for the community's help in being proactive," said Public Works Director Andrew Dirks. "Conserving now helps us stabilize reservoir levels and avoids the need for further emergency measures before repairs are completed."

Residents with additional questions are encouraged to contact Public Works Director Andrew Dirks at (509) 281-4093 or visit www.whitesalmonwa.gov for the most up-to-date information.

Description of affected areas (shown in boundary map):

- Strawberry Mountain
- Spring Street
- El Camino
- Cochran
- Sol Vista
- Alta Vista
- Parts of Loop Road

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