

GREEN PETER DRAWDOWN Q&A – CITY OF SWEET HOME

1. How is our water supply impacted and what are the financial implications?

To compensate for the new water conditions, the City has incurred additional expenses in terms of chemicals, testing, overtime, and community water supplies. The City is tracking those expenses.

2. Is the city or any other entity testing the water for heavy metals, arsenic, and mercury from the silt? Are the filters in use capable of removing heavy metals?

The City has ordered testing for multiple heavy metals and other potential contaminants, with comprehensive results anticipated in December-January. While our filters are not specifically designed to filter out heavy metals, heavy metals generally are combined with non-soluble materials, which are filtered out.

3. How often are the sand filters changed and how many are there? Is there a maintenance cycle?

There are three sand filters that are changed based on the condition of the sand. A typical life cycle for the filters is 10 years, but Sweet Home uses them far less than they were designed for so their life cycle may be longer (even with the recent water conditions).

4. Who bears financial responsibility for this?

Currently, the City is bearing the financial impact. We are tracking expenses.

5. Can the city and other municipalities that have been impacted by this court order take action against the environmental group involved in the lawsuit and show the human impact and that we have a right to clean drinking water, despite the desired impact to fish?

We are currently exploring multiple legal options with multiple law firms and we are discussing options with other cities and the County.

6. Who were the groups involved in filing the lawsuit?

The plaintiffs were the Northwest Environmental Defense Center, WildEarth Guardians, and the Native Fish Society.

7. What is the amount (in levels) of filtration/cleaning/sanitizing chemicals that have been released into the water since October 1st, and at what levels do those chemicals become harmful, either through consumption or skin exposure?

The water has been testing within parameters and at much lower chlorine levels than other cities. Our level of chlorine residuals has been 1.5 mg/L over the last month. The maximum allowable level for consumption is 4.0 mg/L.

8. Why are we (ratepayers) paying for the additional costs to clean the water?

There has not been a cost increase for rate payers.

9. What is the plan for Sweet Home if the lake is no longer usable/attractive as a place to visit?

City staff are constantly evaluating economic development opportunities for Sweet Home and will continue to do so including Quarry Park, and our trail systems.

10. Will the city continue to provide free bottled water, or offer water filters?

Because water is currently testing safe for drinking and other uses and has been back to pre-drawdown quality consistently, the City will not be providing additional water or filters at this time. If conditions change, we will re-evaluate.

11. What compensation will there be for the loss of revenue due to lost visitors for recreation or special events?

The City is currently looking at all economic impacts and assessing options.

12. What compensation will there be for illnesses caused by polluted water?

There is currently no funding available for medical-related issues, but the City also has not received any reports with doctor-verified information that we can investigate. If you have health-related concerns, please work with your healthcare provider and maintain all your documentation.

13. What compensation will there be for homeowners needing to deepen wells?

The City is currently investigating funding options for low-income residents that may need to deepen their wells.

14. Has the city tested the drinking water for organic and inorganic contamination?

Yes, this is a standard part of our testing protocol. Test results have been coming back normal and we will continue to test.

15. Can we hold the environmental groups financially responsible for the damages?

As of right now the City is investigating its financial options for recovery through various avenues.

16. Are all parts of the city affected or only certain parts?

We have received reports from various parts of Sweet Home at varying times over the last several weeks. If you wish to make a report regarding your water, even on our Facebook page, please be sure to include your address or general area so we can investigate and track.

17. Will Sweet Home's water treatment facility need/have any upgrades as a result of the drawdown?

The facility recently had one of its three filters replaced and all of the filters are working as intended. Staff will continue to evaluate the filtration system for any issues.

18. My pet is sick and I think it may be because of the water. What do I do? Will my veterinarian bill be reimbursed?

Staff contacted the Sweet Home Veterinary Hospital on 11/27/2023, who stated they had no cases of pet illness or death related to water quality in Sweet Home. Please note that we have also recently seen salmonella contamination in certain pet foods, a local parvo outbreak, and a multi-symptom respiratory illness in the area not related to water. If your pet is not well, please be sure to get them appropriate veterinary care. If you feel you *do* have appropriate documentation from your vet proving that they are sick as a result of water quality, please send that information to us so we can review and compile it.

19. How is water quality being evaluated?

Sweet Home's drinking water is evaluated in accordance with standards set by the Oregon Health Authority. These include tests for pH balance (acid vs. alkaline), turbidity (cloudiness/muddiness of the water), microbial contaminants (such as bacteria and viruses), and inorganic contaminants (such as salts and metals). Some of these tests are typically performed daily, while others may be biweekly, monthly, annually, or even once every several years. Because of the new conditions created by the drawdown, staff has ordered new tests for everything ahead of schedule. Full test results for some of the more complex tests are expected in December-January.

20. If the water produced by the water treatment plant becomes unsafe, what is the plan for water delivery to residents?

The City has evaluated multiple options for water distribution in case of emergency. Currently, water is testing well within safe limits for drinking and use.

21. Could the residents of Sweet Home sign a petition to the judge to reverse or stay the drawdown decision?

While the City is not currently looking at doing a petition, this may become a valuable addition to a future lawsuit or other action. We will definitely keep the community updated if we decide to go this route!

22. Can the City perform random in-home water quality tests to ensure the characteristics of individual systems/pipes aren't having a negative impact on the water coming out of our taps?

The City is already performing checks at various locations in town to ensure we're capturing water quality data from different neighborhoods. If you still have a concern, please contact us at WQInfo@sweethomeor.gov with specific address information so we can log it and investigate.

23. Can the City meet with the environmental groups involved to encourage a compromise that all parties can bring to the judge for reconsideration?

The City has already reached out to all three environmental groups and has already met with one. Based on recent publications, it is clear that even the environmental groups know that this drawdown had unintended consequences and are calling for a study that would potentially modify future drawdowns. The City of Sweet Home welcomes those conversations if it will help the quality of our lakes and rivers.

24. I don't see the question I submitted included on this list. Where is it?

As questions are received, they are divided by jurisdiction. We have answered questions that we think are best directed to the City of Sweet Home. The remainder of the questions have been directed to the US Army Corps of Engineers. As questions come in, they will be added and answers will be provided in an updated Q&A document at a later date.