

Hi All,

It's summer in Central Oregon once again, and the water is flowing. The spring was kind to us and was a little cooler, which helped with the snowpack and extended the irrigation season for surface water users. For us that rely on groundwater for our supply it has little effect. Groundwater levels have been steadily declining, causing many wells to go dry and requiring deepening or replacement. Our three wells are facing similar issues, and we are starting to plan for necessary future actions.

As most of you know from previous newsletters, our system is finely balanced to meet summer demand. Despite all three pumps operating at maximum capacity, our storage tanks' levels drop every night while sprinklers are in use. Conserve, conserve, conserve; that is the only way we will maintain a reliable water source for us all. The city of Bend has a program that **pays** people to tear out their grass yards - which should be a message to us all about what the future of water use is going to look like in the area.

We have 3 wells that serve as the source of water for the Sun Mountain Water System, one well keeps everything in Sun Mountain Estates going. Another well keeps everything on the south side of the highway in water for the winter months, the 3rd well provides the mass amount of increased water needed to keep us in water during the summer when everyone waters their yards. The 3rd well is capable of providing all the water we need to sustain our water use in the winter if the other two wells go offline. In the summer it takes all 3 wells pumping to keep up with the demand and that only works if folks stick to the odd/even every other day watering system, this is common with almost all water systems, it splits the demand on the system in half each day and allows for the balance of water in to water out.

Since I took over the stewardship of this water system over eight years ago, we've made significant improvements, addressing the most immediate needs first. So far it has been easy to do improvements as the system was not maintained well in the past, most of the low hanging fruit improvements have been taken care of. Looking forward, the improvements get much larger, more complicated, and much more costly, but are necessary to keep the water system a viable source of water for our community.

The age of this water system is catching up on the demand for improvements. Wells that were drilled in 1969 - 1974 are not up to 2024 standards and once they go dry it will not be as simple as deepening them, they will need to be replaced. The storage tanks that are also 50+ years old will also need to be replaced in the not so distant future and expanded in size to keep up with demand and get current with 2024 standards. These are not small projects and we will probably not face these challenges alone as the State and Federal governments recognize that all across the country the old infrastructure needs to be addressed and have funds/programs to help. We do however need to have a plan of how to move forward and that will involve engineering of the system to figure out the steps and improvements needed.

I have started the process of partnering with the professionals to look at our system to figure what is needed and hopefully a solid timeline for upgrades. I have secured an easement for a new well site and will be looking to find a suitable site for a new storage facility for our water. The new and increased storage will go a long way to increasing the reliability of our water and I think is the top priority - unfortunately it is the most complicated and expensive.

Why do we need more than we have if the system is operating fine?

The ideal and one of the requirements for a water system is to have a 4 day supply of water for emergency situations. We have about a 4 hour supply in the summer. If all we needed was the usage that is used in the winter months the system would be solid and we would only be looking at replacing things as they fail, that is not the reality. The increased fire threat in the area has an impact, the power company is continuing more and more to warn us that they will be shutting off the power if conditions warrant. All of our water is pumped out of the ground, without power our water stops replenishing, more storage could help us during those times if we can place the storage in a situation that it is in now where gravity feed keeps us all going. The additional benefit is that we could have a supply of water that could help with fire suppression. We do not really have that at this point in time.

One of the low hanging fruit items I would like to address next is setting up an emergency plan that includes being able to text and email all the patrons to inform you of problems and keep you all up to date in real time. I am asking that you all send me a textable phone number that we can use to contact you and an email address that we can add to our database. Please send the information with your next payment or if you use your bank to pay with billpay send me an email to [sunmountainwater@gmail.com](mailto:sunmountainwater@gmail.com) - we will update our system to be able to communicate in a more effective manner. If you do not have a cell phone or an email address give me a call at 541 382-7309 and we can work out the best way to communicate.

We have done a refresh on the website and I encourage you all to visit it to get more information and as always you can call me directly with any questions or comments. 2025 will see an increase in the base rate of \$5.00 taking it from the current \$32 to \$37, you will see more information on that proposed increase in the fall as we get closer to the new year.

Enjoy the rest of your year, conserve our precious water, and remember to follow the odd/even watering schedule.

Give Jerry a wave and a smile as you see him around the neighborhood!!

Thanks for helping us continue to serve – Jamie 😊