



Port Orford Mayor Urges Residents to Conserve Water

8/14/2025

As we enter the driest part of the summer season, I urge all Port Orford residents to conserve water.

The flows into our reservoir are lowest at this time of year —just when we have more tourists coming to town and many of us are gardening. Our city's monthly water consumption has increased by 1 million gallons since May as we provide water for all our summer visitors and for our gardens.

Increased water use in summer is typical, but adding to the equation now, challenges at our aging water treatment plant mean that we need to use more water than before to keep our filters clean in a process called backwashing. As a result, we need staff working around the clock to keep clean water flowing into everyone's homes and businesses. In addition, we had a large water line break over the weekend.

All that is to remind everyone that our city's drinking water is precious, so please use it carefully as we all need to get through this driest time of the year together!

While city staff is focused on keeping the water flowing to everyone's home, as Mayor, I have been searching for funding solutions to help us with some crucial upgrades to help make our water system more reliable and efficient.

We are aiming to get our reservoir dredged this fall —and to remove the collapsing culvert upstream, to prevent more sediment from filling up our reservoir. Invitations to bid for these jobs are out now —and I have fingers crossed that the grant monies we've secured will be enough to cover costs for these crucial projects.

The next tier of top priorities is getting our Water Plant's filtration system upgraded so we don't need to use so much water for backwashing the filters, and to save on staff time. This has been on the to-do list of our water master plan for over a decade, but the upgrade is moving from the "nice to do soon" to the "absolutely necessary to do asap" category.

In addition, we still need to upgrade our leakiest, break-prone lines and our old water meters. As I reported earlier this year, we had invested quite a lot of energy and money into applying for a FEMA BRIC grant to help us with these projects, but that program was cancelled by the Trump Administration. In mid-July, Oregon joined 20 states in challenging the Administration's cancellation of the grant program. In early August, a Washington judge granted a preliminary injunction to prevent the Congressionally appropriated BRIC grant monies from being diverted to other purposes. Whether courts can help cities like ours to regain access to this important federal grant opportunity remains to be seen.

In early September, our city will be meeting with infrastructure funding experts at Business Oregon to see how we might pivot to find other grant or loan opportunities to help us address our urgent water infrastructure problems.

The City Staff and the City Council strive to keep everyone informed and up-to-date on the issues affecting the town. Thank you for your time in reading this letter and your continued attention on this matter.

Mayor, Ann Vileisis