

WHERE ARE WE WITH OUR WATER SYSTEM?

Water affects every person who lives and visits Herron Island. We have pure clean water and want to always keep it that way. The goal of the Board and the water committee is to research information about upgrading to a new distribution system, and to evaluate the operation and management of our existing system so we can present information to our members, enabling the Board, the committee and membership to make informed decisions.

Following many months of research we had a joint meeting in March 2008 with the Board and the water committee when we agreed to complete two tasks so as to be ready to present true and factual information to all members. The first task was to finish our HMC Water System Plan, through the approval process, which was started many years before, and now needed completion to move forward. Once the first task was completed we agreed to work on the second, which was to have engineered, bid-ready drawings done, so we could secure bids from companies such as Peninsula Light, Washington Water, Northwest Water and others. The committee and Board agreed to present actual dollar costs to the membership rather than concepts and estimates for this very important and large project.

Since March 2008 the main focus has been completing the Water System Plan (WSP). At the time it made sense to stay with the engineering firm who designed our new reservoir back in 2005 and who had also begun work on our Water System Plan (WSP). Montgomery Engineering changed to Anchor Environmental during this time, taking on many other projects, not just water. To complete the Water System Plan review we began with electronic copies from Anchor which were updated and revised and, after many phone calls and emails, the first draft finally came to us in November 2008.

Water Committee Meeting
Saturday, March 28th, 2009
9:30 – 11:00 am
Fire Hall/Community Center

Our plan has ten major sections covering everything from Herron Island population to pumps and wells, and on to future predictions. Many islanders read and critiqued this document producing the revisions and edits considered necessary for an updated and complete presentation. On March 1st, 2009, this plan was sent to the Washington State Department of Health and to Pierce County Water for their approval. The continuous encouragement and support of so many islanders has been instrumental in helping us reach this goal and is greatly appreciated.

Because we have no water system engineer within our committee or in HMC Management, we have requested and received input from two engineering firms. Both firms agree replacement of our distribution system is not needed or necessary *immediately*. All reports past and present indicate the primary reason to replace our water system would be to provide enhanced flow. At this time, we are not in an emergency situation. We acknowledge there is water loss in our system. However, without individual user meters we can only record how much water enters the system; we have no way to accurately measure actual water use or water loss or whether the loss is on individual properties or within the general distribution system. The Water Department works to immediately repair all identified water problems. This is the standard accepted practice for a system installed in the 50s and falls within current government mandates.

March 2009

When the time comes we will be continuing with the agreed plan, which is to have engineered bid-ready drawings done so that we can secure bids to present actual dollar costs to membership. We have time, therefore, to sort through some important issues first.

Many discussions about our water system upgrade involve how the costs of the upgrade will be divided among members. We need to address these legitimate concerns. During the March Board meeting the Board tasked the water committee to look at various ways the capital costs of the upgrade could be assessed. They hope we can complete this task within the next three months. Members will vote and choose the assessment method they want, and the method receiving the majority of votes will prevail. (Note: This vote will only be about how to divide the costs of the water system upgrade, not about “ownership” of the system.)

As you can see, we have made headway but still have an enormous job ahead of us. It takes time to find answers on all fronts. There are many opinions out there, but we must understand the documented facts as we proceed. We plan to have our new water system installed within a maximum of five years. Let’s all work together to get the answers we need to move forward on this project.

We want to hear from you. We need energetic people who have an open mind and a willingness to find answers to the difficult questions before us. Our new “HMC Water email” is open to everyone. We want to hear from you at: HMCWaterWorks@yahoo.com. *The Water Committee*