

FAQ – Changes to the Bylaws and other questions.

Q. Why are we considering a change to the OBCG bylaws?

A. As a non-profit organization we are required to have bylaws. The current bylaws were adopted in 2010. In the course of achieving a “green” operating status to our water system, the state Department of Health directed us to strengthen our bylaws to ensure that we promote water efficiency/conservation to keep our water rights.

Q. Why are we moving to a three member board?

A. Our system is relatively small, and we found that having a even number of board members promotes division, rather than become larger, we chose to be smaller when the opportunity presented itself. This model is used by other, larger systems (Belfair Water District #1 serves a much larger number of connections and has a 3-member board). Also, because each board member receives as compensation one annual fee waiver per year, downsizing to 3 members means one less waiver, which means more revenue for our system.

Q. Why is 3,000 gallons/month considered “base” usage?

A. The successful effort to obtain “green” operating status for our system had several important benefits but also required some changes in how we talk about water use.

Key Benefit: All properties are now considered “full-time” use. – prior to 2019, most properties were only allowed 180 days occupancy per year. – this has a positive impact on the value of the property.

However, the upgrade to “green” came with a combination of other requirements and expectations from DOH and the Department of Ecology (the two agencies that regulate community water systems). Our total annual water withdrawal (as a community) must remain within our legal water right. We also must demonstrate efforts to comply with the DOH Water Use Efficiency mandate. Our metering records showed 3,000 gallons was the average amount of water drawn per member per month; also, 3,000 gallons/month would fit within our water right. Therefore, 3,000 gallons/month became the “base” usage.

Q. What does a “tiered” rate structure mean to members?

A. The OBCG system is categorized as a municipal water system, and it is common for municipal water systems to promote efficient water use with a tiered rate structure. The intent of authorizing a tiered rate structure in the proposed update of the bylaws is to discourage overuse by imposing a financial penalty for excessive use.

Q. What condition is the OBCG water system infrastructure in — meaning the pipes and pumps (and wells) that supply our residential connections?

A. The PVC pipes that supply water in a closed loop may have been the best available nearly 50 years ago, but a water system built today would use a PVC pipe with a thicker wall. Our pipes are increasingly brittle and subject to failure. We have been advised to install a new well and more powerful pump, which would allow for the original well and its pump to be retired and decommissioned, and for the newer well to become the backup system. A new well and more powerful pump will not be inexpensive.

Q. Who do I call if I have a concern or need assistance?

A. Look to the directory for assistance. For electrical issues, contact Mason County PUD. For general interest questions, please use the email OrchardWater@yahoo.com. You can also contact the board directly if there's an unexpected water supply issue. Remember, always contact the board before you plan to dig so that we can ensure there isn't an accidental impact to the water system.

Q. When did we get a website, and why do we have one?

A. The website is new in 2021 and exists to share information with our members, over time we'll include water test results, Progress reports for improvements to the water system, and soon you'll be able to go online to review your water meter activity results.