



CITY OF REDMOND
Office of the Mayor

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September 18, 2023

Via Email and First Class Mail

The Oregon Water Resources Commission
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Salem, Oregon 97301
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On behalf of the Redmond City Council, this letter is intended to let you know the City has a pending water permit application with the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD). To meet the needs of our municipality, we believe the application must be approved under the current rules of the Department. Parallel with our need to provide water are our efforts to conserve this precious resource.

This letter explains those initiatives in further detail.

Approval of our application helps Redmond protect the health, safety and welfare of our current and future residents. Of equal importance, it also helps us meet the housing goals, land use objectives, and the myriad of other legal responsibilities placed upon cities by the State of Oregon and the Federal Government.

Redmond is among Oregon's and even the nation's fastest growing cities. Over the past decade the city's population has increased from around 26,000 to nearly 38,000. The annual growth rate continues in the 2% – 4% range.

The pending water permit application requests an additional 5.12 cubic feet per second (cfs). It was submitted to the Oregon Water Resources Department in December 2022. In conjunction with the submittal the City will comply with the State's current mitigation rules and will transfer surface water rights permanently back into the Deschutes River. The current groundwater application must be reviewed under the State's current rules.

An approval would allow Redmond sufficient water through 2043, when our forecasted population is 56,810. Over this time period Redmond is expected to add approximately 6,500 housing units.

Concurrent with our increasing population and our need for water, the City implements substantive conservation programs, and has for some time. We recognize water is an increasingly precious resource. Over the years, as land has been annexed into the city for development, the City has returned a large portion of the undeveloped lands' water rights back to the Deschutes River, effectively using less water than the land would have used for irrigation based on the underlying water right on the land. As such, Redmond has provided more water in-stream (in the Deschutes River) than is required for its mitigation obligation. It is also noteworthy that collectively, the cities of Central Oregon consume less than 4% of all the water appropriated in the Deschutes Basin.

Additionally, based on the findings published in the White Paper, "*Understanding Upper Deschutes Basin Groundwater Levels*," the City's application for an additional 5.12 cfs will not cause the resource to be over-appropriated, as the study shows that the aquifer recharge is much greater than the demand seen by the additional pumping of groundwater.

We have been good stewards and take conservation seriously. Below are a list of initiatives we have championed either at the national, state, or regional level:

- Proactively installed remote pressure and leak detection throughout the distribution system using dry barrel fire hydrants to more efficiently find and repair water losses that might have otherwise not been seen in our distribution piping.
- Early adopter of fully metered AMI system to record and track every drop out of every endpoint, including hydrants.
- Early adopter of custom water engagement software (AquaHawk) that is publicly facing, to inform and engage residents of their water use on an hourly basis.
- Early adopter of a Water Conservation Rebate program, (which is now being utilized by other cities in the Deschutes basin). We also have a robust conservation program including free water fixtures and showerheads as well as outdoor hardware. We utilize public information campaign tools including billing inserts, mailers, social media, and outdoor events such as The Home and Garden Show, Farmers Markets, and other community gatherings.

We also work closely with our partners at the Redmond School District to bring awareness of conservation into the classrooms as part of the curriculum.

Public policy is also driving change. In early 2023, the Redmond City Council authorized staff to move forward with City Development Code changes that will allow and encourage more water friendly landscaping such as xeriscaping and artificial turf, rather than grass. Our Parks Division is also evaluating the feasibility of artificially turfing our most heavily used soccer fields.

Additionally, we are embarking on a comprehensive rate study to incentivize reduced water usage by way of a tiered rate structure, where higher volume users are billed at a higher rate.

We have been a responsible partner to the state's water objectives and have managed the resource with a philosophy and an investment approach that parallels that of the Water Commission. We understand the Commission will be looking at updated rules regarding groundwater appropriation. We appreciate the need for that review in light of the drought conditions over recent years.

From our perspective, those rules should take the following into consideration:

1. That each water basin and each aquifer in the state should be evaluated individually based on the unique characteristics and science specific to each basin. For example, a 1,000' deep aquifer over a large geographic basin is not the same as a 300' deep aquifer.
2. Because of the unique political, public policy and legal requirements cities have, their use of groundwater must be evaluated differently than other users.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Commission and the Department to provide water to our increasing population to ensure the preservation of the public welfare, safety and health of our community. We are planning to attend the upcoming Commission meeting in Burns on September 28 to discuss this further during public testimony.

Thank you in advance for your partnership.

With warm regards,



Edward Fitch
Mayor
Redmond, Oregon

cc: City Council