

FAQs for Water System Customers Regarding the USACE's Drawdown Operations

What is the US Army Corps' (USACE) drawdown operation?

A Biological Opinion published by the National Marine Fisheries Service directed USACE to implement specific measures to support the protection of endangered fish species at several Willamette Valley reservoirs, including Green Peter, Lookout Point and Detroit Reservoir. USACE drawdown operations include lowering water levels at these reservoirs to improve downstream fish passage.

Is my water system affected by the drawdown?

The following public water systems are affected:

- Downstream of Green Peter Reservoir (South Santiam River)
 - [City of Sweet Home](#) (PWS #00851)
 - [City of Lebanon](#) (PWS #00473)
 - [City of Albany](#) (PWS #00012)
- Downstream of Lookout Point Reservoir (Dexter Lake)
 - [City of Lowell](#) (PWS #00492)
- Downstream of Lookout Point Reservoir (Middle Fork Willamette River)
 - [Springfield Utility Board](#) (PWS #00837)
- Downstream of Detroit Reservoir (North Santiam River)
 - [City of Gates](#) (PWS #00317)
 - [Lyons Mehama Water District](#) (PWS #00493)
 - [City of Salem](#) (PWS #00731)
 - [City of Stayton](#) (PWS #00843)
- Downstream of Detroit Reservoir (Santiam River)
 - [City of Jefferson](#) (PWS #00408)
 - [City of Albany](#) (PWS #00012)

How is the drawdown impacting my drinking water?

The reservoir drawdown increases the turbidity (cloudiness) of the water downstream of the reservoirs, which can be worsened by rain and storm events. This may challenge water systems' treatment processes and, in some cases, result in finished

water with color or odor. These changes **do not pose any health risks**, and the water remains safe to drink.

Why is there color in my water?

The drawdown can lead to an increase in organics and inorganics in the water:

- Organics: Decaying vegetation can stain the water, giving it a brownish appearance.
- Inorganics: Naturally occurring minerals like iron and manganese may increase, causing discoloration.

Is the discoloration harmful?

No. Discolored water is safe to drink if it has been treated to the regulatory standards. Water providers continuously monitor water quality and will issue a public notice if the water is unsafe for consumption.

Why does my water smell different?

Adjustments to treatment methods or chemical dosages during the drawdown process can affect the taste and smell of water. Despite these changes, the water remains safe to drink. Water providers will notify customers if the water becomes unsafe.

Why does my water smell like chlorine?

Chlorine is added during the treatment process to disinfect water before distribution. During the drawdown or weather events leading to high turbidity levels, some water systems may temporarily increase chlorine dosages to address changes in water chemistry which could result in stronger chlorine smell in water.

What is my water system doing to respond to the drawdown?

Water systems downstream of these reservoir drawdowns are actively monitoring raw and finished water turbidity levels, water quality parameters such as chlorine residual and pH, and water treatment plant operations. Water systems are coordinating with Oregon Health Authority-Drinking Water Services to ensure drinking water standards are met. During drawdown operations USACE will host regular meetings with state agencies, water system staff, and interested City officials to discuss real-time forecasted dam operations, reservoir level information, and current conditions of individual water treatment plants.

Resources:

- [USACE Willamette Valley Project Injunction Summary](#)
- [USACE Willamette Valley Environmental Impact Statement](#)
- [Turbidity – EPA fact sheet](#)