

**JEFFERSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

AGENDA REQUEST

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Matt Tyler, Parks and Recreation Manager
Shawn Frederick, Central Services Director

DATE: August 11, 2025

RE: **WORKSHOP: Quilcene Park Drinking Water Supply**

STATEMENT OF ISSUE:

The public water hydrant at Quilcene Park presents several ongoing challenges for the community as a whole and for Jefferson County Parks and Recreation. The general public regularly uses this hydrant for free water for domestic purposes that extend beyond typical park visitors' needs (e.g., filling tanks mounted on trucks or trailers). This situation has led to several issues:

Water Costs: Uncontrolled water consumption by the public for domestic purposes results in excessive water costs. From May 2024 through May 2025, Jefferson County Parks and Recreation paid \$2,754 for 405,098 gallons of water. It is estimated that 99% of this water is for non-campground use. A table of month's use and costs can be found at the end of this report.

Conflicts with Campground Users: The frequent and sometimes extended use of the hydrant by the public can lead to conflicts with registered campground users who also rely on this water source.

High Maintenance Costs and Staff Burden: The frost-free hydrant was not designed for such heavy use and requires frequent repair. It is vulnerable to vandalism and damage from individuals attempting to adjust it. Below is a summary of recent issues:

- The hydrant was replaced in September 2024 after being struck by a vehicle.
- Complaints about water quality beginning in December 2024 led to numerous checks.
- It was replaced again in February 2025 due to mechanical failure.
- Replaced O-ring in July 2025 to fix leak. Repaired again August 7, 2025. However, hissing sound remains. Staff suspects issue may be with underground supply pipe.
- Bottom line: Equipment is not designed for this level of constant daily use.

Immediate Water Quality and Safety Needs: The water from the hydrant is now cloudy and silty, posing a potential health hazard. To meet health standards, the hydrant and approximately 200 feet of associated rusty, galvanized pipe require immediate replacement.

ANALYSIS:

Water Quality Investigation: The Public Utility District No. 1 of Jefferson County (PUD) investigated the issue of cloudy water and sediment in the water and determined it was not caused by the PUD water supply. They flushed the local lines and looked at the existing Frost-Free Hydrant and water pipe. Staff in Jefferson County Environmental Health were consulted about water quality and indicated that it is a valid concern that should be addressed as soon as possible.

PUD Collaboration: A meeting was held with the PUD to explore options for dispensing water. Parks and Rec staff followed up with the PUD staff recently to inquire about availability of the PUD water-dispensing station in Port Hadlock. We are awaiting response.

Fixture and Vendor Research: Research into various types of outdoor drinking water fixtures, including sanitary frost-free hydrants and paddle-style spigots. This included consultation with the PUD, Swift Plumbing, and Environmental Health.

Contractor Quotation: Obtained a specific quote from Swift Plumbing for a comprehensive solution to the immediate issues for \$17,533.

Historical and Regulatory Context: Consulted with Emma Erickson (Environmental Health) about water quality, health, water supply, and previous discussions about this topic. Key points are that: yes, this is a water quality issue *and* a health issue; this problem has a long history and needs to be solved; and that it is also a water resource issue (water is limited). This hydrant is one of the largest users in Quilcene. See excerpt from Bill Graham (PUD) email:

“...water hauling is a resource problem in that the county is disproportionately paying for water being used privately for domestic purposes outside the utility’s service area. I emailed Scott Pollock at DOH about this years ago and he confirmed that the use equates to something like 4 to 11 ERUs worth of water depending on system capacity constraints. The proposed solution was a standard outdoor faucet instead of the yard hydrant and that could have led to more service connections. A good idea, but not necessarily a popular idea...”

The following options have been identified to address the drinking water supply issues at Quilcene Park:

Option 1: Do Nothing (Continue with Current Failing System)

Description: Make no changes. Continue to use the existing frost-free hydrant and the 200-foot corroded galvanized pipe that supplies it. Find additional funding and hire contractors to complete repairs as needed.

Pros:

- No immediate capital expenditure.

Cons:

- The existing infrastructure is beyond effective repair by park staff. Includes current condition of an undiagnosed hissing sound following replacement on July 17, 2025 of an O-ring.
- Fails to address high water costs, user conflicts, or health and safety liabilities.
- Poses a growing health risk due to deteriorating water quality.
- Guarantees eventual catastrophic failure of the pipe, leading to a complete loss of water and emergency replacement at a higher cost.

Estimated Costs:

- Capital Costs: \$0 immediately, but high probability of emergency replacement later (\$20,000+).
- Ongoing Operational Costs: Continued higher water bills estimated at \$2,700 year, plus frequent contractor repair bills (\$200-\$600 per incident).

Option 2: Comprehensive Replacement and Upgrade (Based on Swift Plumbing Quote), Combined New Agency for Oversight and additional Funding for Water, & Maintenance by a Plumbing Contractor

Description: This option, based on the Swift Plumbing quote, includes:

- Replacing the 200-foot galvanized line with a new polyethylene water line.
- Installing one new sanitary, frost-free hydrant for public use.
- Installing one new, dedicated paddle-style spigot for campground users.
- Seek an appropriate agency other than Parks and Recreation to provide oversight of the public water supply.
- Find additional funding to pay for capital, operational, and maintenance expenses.

Pros:

- Resolves immediate infrastructure failures and health concerns.
- Provides separate, appropriate fixtures for the public and for campers, which should reduce conflict.
- Based on a contractor quote, providing some cost certainty.

Cons:

- Does not address the big picture, systematic community drinking water issue.
- Highest upfront capital cost.
- Does not solve the core problem of unrestricted water hauling, meaning high water costs will likely continue.
- Requires a sustainable funding source for the capital cost, future water bills, and professional maintenance, as the Parks and Recreation budget cannot absorb these expenses.

- Requires reassignment of this project and ongoing maintenance and operations to an appropriate agency other than Parks and Recreation.

Estimated Costs:

- Capital Costs: approximately \$18,000
 - Operational:
 - o Water Bill: \$2,500 - \$3,000 per year, depending on usage patterns.
 - o Maintenance: ~\$3,000 per year for a qualified plumbing contractor. Park staff are not equipped to maintain a sanitary community water supply.
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Option 3: Decommission Public Hydrant and Install Camper-Only Spigot

Description: Decommission and remove the existing public hydrant. Install a new, low flow, paddle-style water spigot in the designated campground area away from the campground road.

Pros:

- Reduces long term community risk by providing an incentive for the community and individual water users to seek sustainable long-term solutions.
- Most effective option for reducing costs; significantly lowers installation, water, and maintenance expenses.
- Resolves the primary cause of overuse and high-water bills.
- Eliminates conflicts over the hydrant.
- Maintenance of the new spigot can be absorbed into the existing Parks budget.

Cons:

- Increases short-term community risk by removing an important source of drinking water for the public. *(However, see note above about the potential to use the PUD water-dispensing station in Port Hadlock.)*
- Unpopular and places a financial and health burden on potentially vulnerable people.

Estimated Costs:

- Capital Costs: decommissioning existing hydrant: \$500 - \$2,500.
 - Install paddle-style spigot: \$5000-\$7500
 - Maintenance of new paddle style spigot can be absorbed by the existing Parks and Recreation Budget.
 - Ongoing Operational Costs: Water consumption by campers (lower than current total use, estimated at \$1500/year).
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Option 4: Public Utility District (PUD) Collaboration

Description: This involved exploring partnership opportunities with the local Public Utility District.

Status & History: Parks and Recreation staff met with the PUD.

- Water Dispensing Kiosk: Deemed not viable by the PUD due to anticipated low sales volume versus the PUD's cost for installation/maintenance.
- PUD-Funded Hydrant: The PUD providing and funding a free water hydrant was also deemed not feasible by the PUD
- The conversation regarding this collaboration with the PUD should be continued at higher levels including executive staff and elected officials.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Fiscal impact to be determined based on BoCC direction for resolution.

RECOMMENDATION:

Review the materials, discuss the issue and the options, and provide staff with direction as to how to proceed, considering the pros and cons of various approaches.

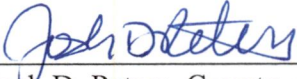
Note that implementation of Option 2 (Comprehensive Replacement and Upgrade) is contingent upon securing funding and assigning operational responsibility outside of Parks and Recreation division of Public Works. Option 2 is the only one that permanently solves the immediate infrastructure and health risks while continuing to serve both campers and the public. However, for this solution to be successful, the following conditions must be met:

- Address the Systemic Issue: This hydrant highlights a broader community challenge regarding water access. A stakeholder group—including the PUD, Jefferson County DCD, and Public Health—should be convened to develop a long-term, countywide solution. Continuing to provide unlimited free water at this single location discourages the development of more sustainable, permanent solutions for residents.
- Secure Funding: The Parks and Recreation budget cannot support the \$17,533 capital cost or the ~\$6,000 in annual operating and maintenance costs. Funding must be allocated from other county sources before the project can proceed.

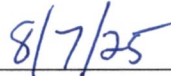
Option 3 is the most appropriate option for the dedicated purpose of the equipment: the provision of water for campers at Quilcene Park. As listed above, however, there would be impacts to those who are accustomed to accessible (free) potable water there for private use.

Irrespective of the chosen direct, appropriate oversight is warranted. Responsibility for project oversight, ongoing maintenance, and water quality monitoring should be assigned to an agency better equipped for managing a public water supply, such as the Jefferson County PUD or Jefferson County Public Health.

REVIEWED BY:



Josh D. Peters, County Administrator



Date