

The Bottom Line is Water Flushing the Pipes

By Lisa Beutler
Special to GP Now

It's pretty easy to take water for granted in Grants Pass. Thanks to investments by city leaders, reliable clean water is just a turn of the tap away, but as the city moves forward with building a new Water Treatment Plant, several local business leaders are not so sure the community really understands how important water and replacing the existing plant really is.

For Brandon Crews of Weekend Beer Company, water is everything. Crews is the brewer and a co-owner of the thriving brewery and tap room. He and his partners like to say their business is about living your weekend every day of the week.

Owned and operated by two local couples - Ashley and Brandon Crews, and Kelsey and Troy Yoho - Weekend Beer Company is a homegrown enterprise. Brandon, Ashley and Kelsey have been friends since middle school. Kelsey and her husband Troy met at the United States Military Academy at West Point. They both served 10 years in the U.S. Army as officers and each deployed twice to Afghanistan. All four moved back to Grants Pass to raise families and pursue a shared passion for great beer. Starting a brewery seemed like a "no-brainer," they said.

Craft brewers around the world agree that water is actually beer's most important ingredient. One expert, Max Unverferth, one of three brewers at the mobile beer outfit, Nowhere in Particular, emphasizes that beer, like our bodies, is mostly water and that, "Water is the most important ingredient in beer."



LOCAL BREWER BRANDON CREWS POURS A SAMPLE OF ONE OF HIS BEERS AT WEEKEND BEER COMPANY.

In a recent interview for *The Vine*, a beverage trade publication, Unverferth explains that regional differences in water affect the taste of beer. Water experts can pinpoint varying water factors and, in fact, a significant number of brewers have backgrounds in chemistry and related sciences. Ultimately, brewers know that differences in water create differences in beer.

According to Unverferth, "East Coast beers tend to be a little earthier, West Coast beers are danker, and Midwestern beers are juicier."

To him and other brewers, the importance of water to the overall taste of beer cannot be overstated.

"If you ignore H₂O, the beer will be dead in the water," said Unverferth.

Europeans also take the wa-

ter in their beer seriously. Some European cities are associated with distinct water profiles. Experienced tasters can recognize the regions that a beer emanates from by the quite different and beloved beer styles. More than one brewer in the U.S. has mimicked the source water of these beers to reproduce similar flavor profiles.

For Brandon Crews and Weekend Beer Company, water quality consistency is also especially important. Some breweries use secondary treatment to ensure that their water is always the same, said Crews. Weekend does not need to do this, he said.

Crews knows the water they receive from the city is always clean and reliably contains an expected composition of minerals and other positive water features. This provides for con-

(See "WATER" page 9)

City of Grants Pass water distribution staff began the process of unidirectional water flushing Monday, June 8. Unidirectional flushing opens specific pipes in the city's water distribution system to flush water through the pipes in a single direction in order to clean the insides of the pipes.

The process is expected to continue throughout the summer as city staff moves from section to section of the city to complete the work along 188 miles of piping. Staff will open specific pipes to flush the water in one direction. This increases the speed and force of the water which helps scrub the pipes. The water is tested during the flush until it meets clear water standards, releasing thousands of gallons of water into the surrounding streets.

Flushing in each neighborhood can take between 10 minutes and more than four hours, depending on the area and number of fire hydrants located there. Some hydrants may get flushed twice, so staff may leave an area and come back later to flush them again.

During the flushing, residents in the area will experience lowered water pressure. Water may

become discolored for a temporary length of time, and city staff recommends residents use bottled water or other liquids during the flushing. Residents are also cautioned to avoid running tap water, or appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, and automatic ice machines until the flushing process is completed.

Residents should also avoid driving through the water being flushed if possible and slow down for safety. Water can be deeper than it appears and is not safe to drive through at full speed.

After flushing has been completed in an area, residents should turn on cold water faucets and spigots until the water runs clear. In order to avoid drawing any sediment into their hot water heaters, residents should not use their hot water tap until their water is running clear.

Information about which neighborhoods will be scheduled for flushing will be available through the city's social media platforms and the city's website at: www.grantspassoregon.gov/1366/2020-Water-Main-Flushing.



CITY CREWS CONTINUE UNIDIRECTIONAL FLUSHING OF THE CITY'S 188 MILES OF WATER PIPING.

Water... (from page 5)

sistent brewing operations and customers knowing that they can always expect Weekend Beer brand quality, Crews said.

While it is easy to understand why a brewery or coffee shop is going to worry about water, other businesses are equally water dependent.

Doug Bradley, chairman of the city's Tourism Committee and a long-time manager in the hospitality industry, said he can't overstate the importance of reliable water delivery for his industry as well.

Bradley has been part of the Grants Pass community for more than nine years. He loves the "community spirit" and willingness of residents and businesses to help one another here, he said. Beyond that, Bradley points to the city slogan, and affirms his and his customer's love for the Grants Pass climate.

Most days you can find Bradley managing the team at the Holiday Inn Express and supporting sales for three sister hotels. He says Southern Oregon visitors choose his property because they place travelers in the middle of natural beauty, breathtaking wildlife and celebrated historic sites.

Bradley also points out that being situated at the junction of I-5 and Redwood Highway puts visitors near Grants Pass's crown jewel, the Rogue River, and close to everything else. Business guests commute to regional businesses such as ESAM, Marzi Sinks, Encore Ceramics, MasterBrand Cabinets, and Rogue Valley Door, as well as Three Rivers Medical Center and Rogue Community College. He also sees guests heading to Rogue Valley wineries, local breweries, and downtown Grants Pass.

But the river is the star, said

Bradley. His guests enjoy rafting or seasonal fishing, and during non-COVID times, visitors enjoy annual events such as the Boatnik Festival held during Memorial Weekend, he said.

During tourist season, up to 50 percent of his guests might enjoy a river excursion, said Bradley.

While his guests love the river water, it is the city water that makes his business run. Bradley pulls no punches in explaining that if something were to happen to the city water supply, his business would be shut down.

"We couldn't open the doors, period," said Bradley.

On its face this makes sense, but for people who enjoy camping it might be harder to understand why there couldn't be some type of workaround.

Bradley explains that trucking water might marginally help with things like sanitation and showers, but that it would not resolve the concerns of maintaining fire protection. Water needs to be in the system to operate sprinklers and hydrants.

Then there are just basic logistics, he said. In addition to providing some beverage and food services, hotels have significant water needs to operate their laundries. Facility cleanliness is always a priority and in a time of COVID-19 this is amplified tenfold, Bradley said.

Working in industries that are both dependent on water, Bradley and Crews both like to talk about what their businesses do to conserve water. At the brewery, water is used for beer production, mashing, boiling, sparging, and filtration. Packaging-breweries also use water for heating and cooling as well as cleaning and sanitation of equipment and process areas.

Crews utilizes equipment that allows him to reuse as

much water as possible. This saves him money and supports stewardship of the environment, he said.

Bradley is equally proud of the efforts of the hospitality industry to enhance water conservation and references his company's efforts to engage in sustainable practices.

Holiday Inn Express is part of IHG branded hotels. In 2017, IHG-branded hotels avoided \$100 million in total costs by using the IHG Green Engage system accounting for energy, water and waste items, including water utilities.

Both businessmen believe that it is important for the community to know more about city efforts to replace its aging Water Treatment Plant.

Bradley was already familiar with the need for a new plant because of his involvement with the Tourism Committee, but Crews, as a lifelong resident, hadn't really thought a lot about it until he really focused on the importance of water to him and his business.

Crews noted he was "probably like a lot of people in town," in thinking the water has always been there, so there wasn't a need to think about it.

Both men admit that "no one really wants to spend money," but both also believe that investment in a new treatment plant now is essential to ensure the future viability of Grants Pass, they said.

As businessmen, they suggested the city needs to engage in further public engagement about the importance of water, and the need for constructing a new treatment plant.

At the end of the day, what they each really wanted to emphasize was simple: for local businesses, the bottom line is water.

Tree Canopy Applications Now Available Online

The Fall 2020 application for the Tree Canopy Program is now available. The city has 50 trees for home/landowners at a cost of \$50 per tree. The fee includes tree and planting of the tree by city staff. Trees can be planted in front yards or in the public right-of-way in front of properties. The city's Urban Forester will visit each location to assist with selecting the proper species and placement for each location. Trees will be planted in October and November.

Grants Pass recently received the renowned title of Oregon Tree City of the Year. Such an honor would not have been possible without the help of the community.

Applications are available online at: www.grantspassoregon.gov/tree. For additional information email Urban Forester Tony Mecum at tmecum@grantspassoregon.gov, or call (541)450-6162.

For years, citizens here have participated in the city's tree programs, including the Memorial Tree Program and Tree Canopy Program. Both programs increase the canopy coverage of the city, which brings an impressive array of benefits for everyone to enjoy.

The city's tree canopy can serve to increase property values, reduce energy consumption, improve physical and mental health, reduce crime, purify particulates and noxious gases from the air, intercept stormwater surges from enter-

ing the Rogue River, extend the lifespan of paved surfaces under their shade, reduce street noise, calm traffic, enhance tourism, increase retail revenue, improve beauty, sequester carbon dioxide, and many other benefits.

Whereas the Memorial Tree Program increases the tree canopy of city parks, the Tree Canopy Program increases the canopy of neighborhoods, bringing tree benefits to all areas of Grants Pass.

Home/landowners who take advantage of the Tree Canopy Program will be responsible for watering their trees during the warm growing seasons (typically from May to October), or whenever temperatures are high, and precipitation is low. After three years of watering, most trees will be established and can obtain water on their own. The city will replace a tree if it dies within the first year, so long as water was provided.

Due to limited supply, residents are encouraged to apply early. Applications and payment are due by Sept. 25. Payment may be made by check, cash, or credit card. Completed applications and payment (to City of Grants Pass) may be mailed to: Tree Canopy Program, 101 NW A Street, Grants Pass, OR, 97526.

Cash payments may be made at City Hall, 2nd floor, Community Development Department. Credit cards can be accepted in person at City Hall or by phone: Community Development Department at (541)450-6060. There is a small processing fee for credit cards.

Available species include Swamp White Oaks (beautiful, long-lived oaks that are drought tolerant and show off their fall (See "CANOPY" page 12)