

Drinking Water Week, May 2-8 ‘Don’t Move A Mussel’

By Lisa Beutler
Special to GP Now

National Drinking Water Week highlights the Grants Pass water legacy: There when you need it.

This year once again, Grants Pass will join other cities, utilities, private companies, and public agencies across the nation to observe National Drinking Water Week, May 2-8.

The annual celebration, originally declared to be the first week of May by President Ronald Reagan, highlights the importance of reliable drinking water service and the value of water to each of us in our everyday lives. Drinking water refers to the water that comes out of our tap.

The goal of “having water there when you need it,” has special meaning this year.

After years of careful planning, Grants Pass is moving forward on the multi-year construction of a replacement water treatment plant and the phase out of its 90-year-old facility - now well past its projected lifecycle.

This action continues the legacy of the city founders and other city leaders that, through continued investments and improvements, have delivered reliable drinking water services from the Rogue River since 1888.

The goal is for the replacement plant to be fully operational by late spring of 2026.

In addition to securing the city’s water future, the team working on the replacement plant is particularly excited about the benefits of water in-

vestments on the local economy. According to Public Works Director Jason Canady, use of local suppliers and labor is a key priority.

“We plan to continue advertising business opportunities in the local paper. We also have been told that a number of local businesses and employers have already been contacted by some of the larger engineering and construction firms regarding potential subcontracting and partnership opportunities,” said Canady.

Water investments are demonstrated to have positive economic ripple effects. At the national level, recent studies indicate that full funding of needed water infrastructure would create nearly 800,000 new jobs by 2039.

Of these new jobs, 61 percent would be in construction and professional services stimulated by the boost in infrastructure spending.

Increased reliability and water quality would also increase productivity and efficiency in other sectors like manufacturing, leading to job gains.

Wages would also rise: US workers would earn more than \$2.8 trillion in additional disposable household income over 20 years, leading to an increase of more than \$2,000 per household.

Reliable water infrastructure also contributes to improved public health.

National Drinking Water Week also recognizes the importance of protecting water sources, conservation, maintenance, and investment.

It highlights the value, importance, and fragility of the state’s water resources. This is of particular importance to Grants Pass.

The Rogue River watershed has been important to local populations for at least 8,500 years, and now provides world famous whitewater recreation, parks, hiking trails, and campgrounds.

“During Drinking Water Week, we make extra time to celebrate, recognize, and ensure protecting our great water source, the Rogue River,” said Canady.

“Grants Pass officials work closely with state officials to ensure city systems waterways meet the highest standards. Investments in the water system are vital to the city’s economy and to the public health of our residents,” he said.

During the last year, the city also reached out to a number of residents to learn more about their views on reliable access to drinking water.

In addition to thoughts about how many times a day everyone uses water from a faucet, we heard about how important reliability was for local water-focused businesses such as coffee shops and breweries, and the hospitality and healthcare industries.

Several respondents pointed to the importance of reliable water service in attracting new business and employers.

Students told us stories about how important clean water was to their future, and several Grants Pass residents who have lived or worked abroad shared stories about the impacts of not having access to safe, clean water.

Those stories helped to amplify the need for improved drinking water awareness and appreciation in the community.

As part of the festivities the city is sponsoring its second annual Drinking Water Week (See “WATER” page 11)

In response to efforts of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to prevent the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels into state waterways and lakes, the City of Grants Pass has initiated a “Don’t Move A Mussel” public awareness campaign to educate the public about the detrimental conditions these invasive species can cause to waterways and municipal water and wastewater systems.

“Currently, there are not any approved chemical or nonmechanical methods for preventing or removing these mussels from our intake system,” said Grants Pass Water Treatment Plant Superintendent Adam Smith.

Recently, ODFW was alerted to the discovery of invasive zebra mussels attached to and inside Betta Buddy Marimo Ball moss plants sold at pet store chains for home aquariums. Pet store chains including PetCo and PetSmart have removed the Betta Buddy Marimo Balls from their shelves.

ODFW district staff are contacting other local businesses carrying pets and pet products

to determine if they sold or are selling these products.

“We want to thank all pet and aquarium supply stores who have stepped up and quickly taken this product off their shelves,” said Rick Boatner, ODFW Invasive Species Program supervisor and current chairman of the Oregon Invasive Species Council, a statewide effort among many natural resource agencies to keep invasive species out of Oregon.

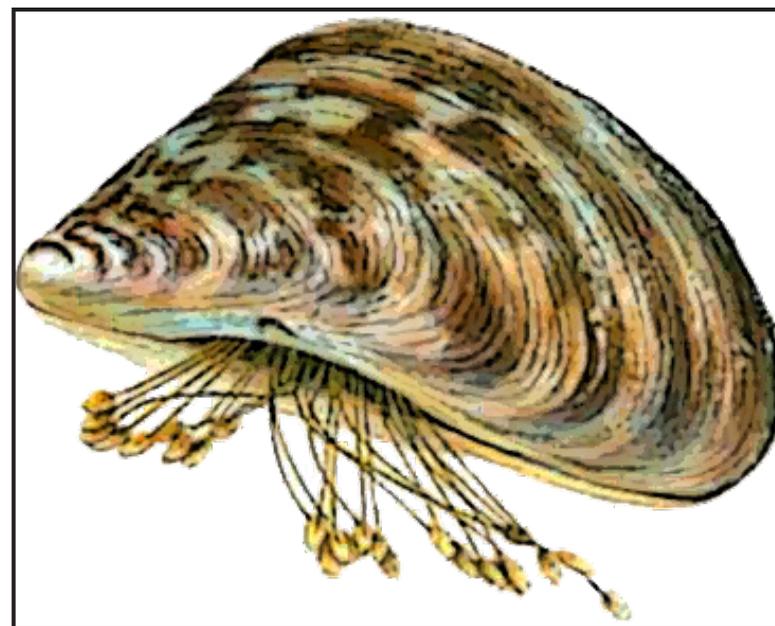
Aquarium owners who may have purchased and used these contaminated moss balls are encouraged to use the three-step method of destroy, dispose, and drain to clean their aquariums immediately.

ODFW has released a how-to video on safely cleaning aquariums and disposing of the moss balls: <https://youtu.be/DeLXmPDW23s>.

The California-based distributor of the moss balls has been identified, but the distributor is just one of many that receive the same product from the same source, so the Oregon Invasive Species Council advises that all moss balls imported from

(See “MUSSEL” page 11)

ZEBRA MUSSELS ARE A VERY AGGRESSIVE INVASIVE SPECIES THAT CAN BE EXTREMELY HARMFUL TO WATERWAYS.



Water... (from page 8)

Poster Contest for local students, grades K-12. Students are asked to create an original poster design using the theme: "There when you need it."

Student poster design entries will be accepted in four categories: grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Thirteen winning posters will be selected, and each winner will receive a \$100 prize. The entry deadline for submissions is 5 p.m. Friday, April 30.

Contest winners will also be recognized at a city council meeting, and be featured in the city's community outreach efforts, including social media recognition campaigns, and Drinking Water Week promotional activities.

Full contest rules and submission information are available at: <https://www.grantspassoregon.gov/1408/Drinking-Water-Week-2021>

For additional information, contact Public Works Department Support Technician Diane Phelan: (541)450-6110.

Mussel... (from page 8)

Ukraine from any distributor should be considered potentially contaminated.

Additional information about how to properly dispose of potentially contaminated aquarium contents is available here: <https://www.fws.gov/fisheries/ANS/zebra-mussel-disposal.html>.

The early life stage of the mussels is called the veliger stage. It is during this microscopic final larval stage that the mussels can be spread without notice.

"Our pre-chlorine dose and contact time at the water treatment plant is more than enough to kill zebra mussel veliger," said Smith.

The greatest risk to the city water system is contamination of the Rogue River, where Grants Pass intakes its drinking water.

"Everything before our pre-chlorine injection point is at risk, including our intake screen, screen wash system, desilting system, intake pumps, and the intake sump system," said Smith.

"Currently, if the mussels got established in the Rogue River, our only option would be to remove them mechanically by scraping on a regular basis," he said.

Those processes can be ex-

pensive and cause undue wear and tear on the city's water distribution system.

The mussels would also threaten the river's entire ecosystem as they multiply and take over the food source used by newly hatched fish, while also contributing to larger algae blooms in the water.

Currently, Oregon and Pacific Northwest waterways are free of zebra and quagga mussels thanks to a monitoring program that requires watercraft to be inspected when entering Oregon, and the swift action of the Oregon Invasive Species Council to alert pet stores and consumers to the contaminated moss balls.

For additional information about the Waterway Access and Aquatic Invasive Species Program, visit: <https://myodfw.com/articles/waterway-access-and-aquatic-invasive-species-permits>.

The City of Grants Pass highly encourages residents to get informed about these special programs and cautions everyone: "Don't Move A Mussel."

"A river is more than an amenity, it is a treasure."
- Oliver Wendell Holmes

Cannova... (from page 4)

ed cleaning, maintenance, and repairs of features in the courtyard at City Hall, including its popular water feature and seating areas.

"There are things that if you defer their maintenance, can cost you more money down the road, but if we maintain them regularly, we save the city money," said Cannova.

Another priority includes a focus on energy savings where

possible, to free up those resources for reinvestment into city facilities, he said.

"I view my primary role as removing obstacles and bringing resources to bear for the team - tools, funding, processes, programs, training - that will help make the job easier and more rewarding," said Cannova.

That makes him the right Guy for the job.

Call 811 BEFORE You Dig!

The City of Grants Pass Public Works Department is gearing up for the National Safe Digging Month of April by reminding the public to call 811 before beginning any outdoor digging project.

April traditionally brings a ground swell of outdoor work which often includes digging, which is why the month of April is dedicated to safe digging awareness by public utilities, states, and local governments.

According to information from natural gas supplier Avista, a great majority of damage to natural gas lines occurs when residents install landscaping, irrigation, and fences.

Before beginning any outdoor digging project, residents are encouraged to call 811 at least two business days before they dig. Calling 811 will get a professional locator to a site to mark the approximate location of underground utility lines.

There is a two-foot tolerance zone on each side of the line, and it is required to hand dig to determine the precise location of the utility in this tolerance zone. This service is free.

Knowing where underground utility lines are buried before digging will help protect from injury, prevent damages to utilities and service disruptions, and avoid potential fines and repair costs.

Every digging job requires a call — even small projects like planting trees and shrubs. The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple utility lines in a common area.

For more information, call 811 or go to www.digsafelyoregon.com



TWO WINNERS FROM LAST YEAR'S DRINKING WATER WEEK POSTER CONTEST. ABOVE IS AN ENTRY BY PEACH GERBER. BELOW IS AN ENTRY BY KAYA COWLES.

