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GROUNDWATER ALLIANCE
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CITY OF GRESHAM OREGON

Rockwood Water
People's Utility District

Building Awareness and Support through Themed Campaigns

Introductions



Nyla Clark - Government Affairs Coordinator
Rockwood Water PUD



Tammy Menkeud - Principal
Consor Engineering

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Agenda – What You'll Learn

- Why Consistent Communications Matters
- Telling the Project Value Story
- The Benefits of an Integrated Outreach Approach and Messaging
- Key Take Aways and Lessons Learned

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- Formed in 2020 by Gresham City Council and Rockwood Water
- Historic partnership to build and operate an independent, safe, and reliable groundwater system
- Signed IGA for design, construction, and O&M of existing and future groundwater infrastructure

Water System Overview

- City of Gresham Water serves 74,000 people
- Rockwood Water serves 66,000 people
- Both Portland wholesale water customers
- Partnership owns existing wells and are developing more
- Water rights providing access to millions of gallons per day

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GROUNDWATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Groundwater Projects

1. Cascade Reservoirs 1 & 2 and Well 7
2. Water Transmission Pipes
3. Cascade Well 8, Reservoir and Treatment Facility
4. Cascade Water Treatment Facility and Pump Station
5. Cascade Well 6 and Treatment Facility
6. Cascade Well 9
7. Cascade Well 10 and Water Transmission Pipe
8. Water System Meter Connection
9. Water System Meter Connection

Legend

- Rockwood Water Service Area
- Gresham Service Area
- R — Reservoir
- WT — Water Treatment Facility
- GW — Groundwater Well
- M — Meter Connection
- PS — Pump Station
- Water Transmission Pipe

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CGA Partnership Approach



- Biweekly communications meetings
- Joint communications planning and messaging
- Team alignment and information sharing
- Common communications channels
  - Reinforces benefits
  - Builds community trust
  - Reaches broader audience
  - Alerts partners about potential issues or misinformation

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Big Picture: Regular and Consistent Communication Matters

- Only communicating with the public about construction disruptions is **a missed opportunity**
- **Consistent communication** with the public, businesses, and policymakers before, during, and after construction **builds trust, reduces disruption, and ensures the public understands—and values—**the project.



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Key to Project Success - Integrated Outreach

Think of it as a continuum:

- Before → Builds understanding, trust and support
- During → Maintains confidence and reduces disruptions
- After → Proves value

If any phase is missing:

- No early comms → Creates speculation, opposition
- No ongoing comms during design, construction and transition→ Fuels rumors, frustration, backlash
- No post comms → Undervalued investment



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Consistent Themes and Messaging Benefits

Use of consistent slogans and themes increases message retention by up to 30%

Source: Nielsen Norman Group

Consistent branding and messaging improves public trust and perception of transparency by up to 23%

Source: Edelman Trust Barometer 2023

Repeated exposure improves message retention, with research suggesting that around 5–7 repetitions (especially when spaced over time) significantly enhances recall and credibility

Source: Fazio et al., 2015; Kang, 2016

Organizations using campaign themes and message frameworks report 21% more efficient content development processes

Source: Content Marketing Institute

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Telling the Value Story

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Strategies

- Start with **a plan**
- Use simple, consistent messaging and a proactive **campaign approach**
- **Be opportunistic –** tie communications to key milestones, themes, existing community events
- **Know your audience** and their specific communication needs
- Remember **internal team members are your best messengers**
- **Repeat** messaging across existing channels
- **Rinse, lather, repeat**

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Unifying Umbrella

- Logo
- Brand colors
- Messaging pillars
- Graphics and photo suite

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Guiding Messaging Pillars

Our water. Our future.



WATER QUALITY



BEST VALUE



LOCAL OWNERSHIP



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Messaging tied to community values and project benefits

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Campaign messaging keeps communications clear, consistent, and aligned—helping people understand the project, trust the information, and maintain support.

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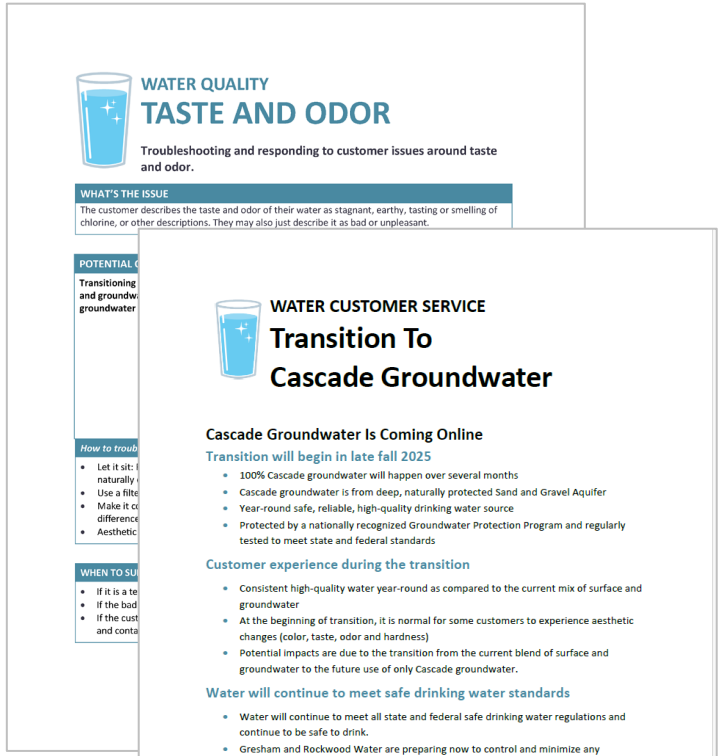
Internal Teams Are Your Best Messengers

- Train staff on messaging and why it's important
- Keep team updated about key project milestones and benefits
- Equip them with tools to effectively answer customer questions and know when to escalate
- Meet them where they are – get their feedback on training
- Monitor and track trends to address potential issues before they turn into a crisis



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Internal Team Training & Tools



WATER QUALITY

TASTE AND ODOR

Troubleshooting and responding to customer issues around taste and odor.

WHAT'S THE ISSUE

The customer describes the taste and odor of their water as stagnant, earthy, tasting or smelling of chlorine, or other descriptions. They may also just describe it as bad or unpleasant.

POTENTIAL C

Transitioning and groundwa groundwater

How to troub

- Let it sit: l naturally
- Use a filte
- Make it c difference
- Aesthetic

WHEN TO SU

- If it is a te
- If the bad
- If the cust and conta

WATER CUSTOMER SERVICE

Transition To Cascade Groundwater

Cascade Groundwater Is Coming Online

Transition will begin in late fall 2025

- 100% Cascade groundwater will happen over several months
- Cascade groundwater is from deep, naturally protected Sand and Gravel Aquifer
- Year-round safe, reliable, high-quality drinking water source
- Protected by a nationally recognized Groundwater Protection Program and regularly tested to meet state and federal standards

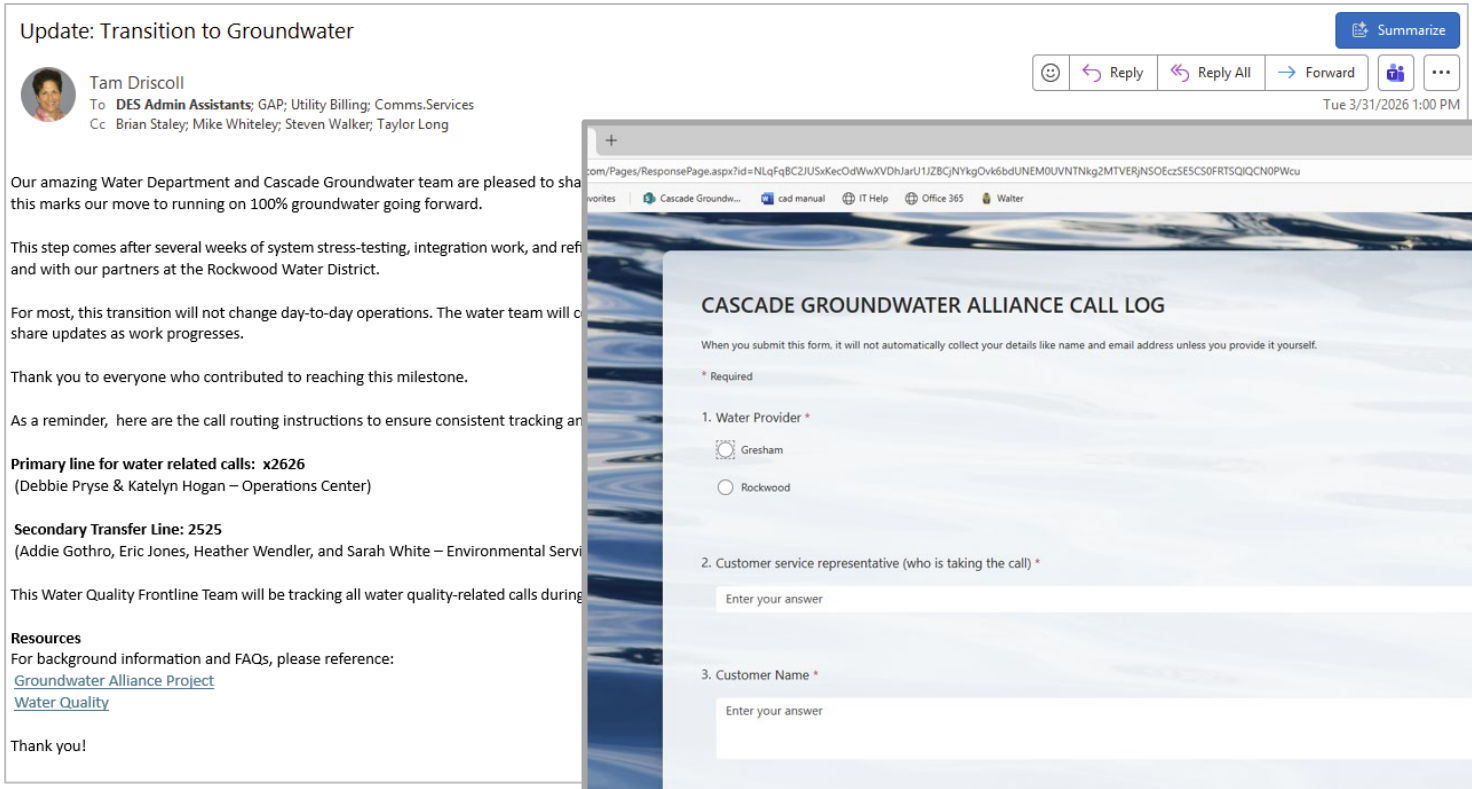
Customer experience during the transition

- Consistent high-quality water year-round as compared to the current mix of surface and groundwater
- At the beginning of transition, it is normal for some customers to experience aesthetic changes (color, taste, odor and hardness)
- Potential impacts are due to the transition from the current blend of surface and groundwater to the future use of only Cascade groundwater.

Water will continue to meet safe drinking water standards

- Water will continue to meet all state and federal safe drinking water regulations and continue to be safe to drink.
- Gresham and Rockwood Water are preparing now to control and minimize any temporary aesthetic changes, including cleaning out pipes and conducting studies to determine the best way to manage the water distribution system.
- Before, during, and after the transition, Gresham and Rockwood Water will also be continually testing and monitoring our water quality.

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Update: Transition to Groundwater

Summarize

Reply | Reply All | Forward

Tam Driscoll

To **DES Admin Assistants**; GAP; Utility Billing; Comms.Services

Cc Brian Staley; Mike Whiteley; Steven Walker; Taylor Long

Tue 3/31/2026 1:00 PM

Our amazing Water Department and Cascade Groundwater team are pleased to sha
this marks our move to running on 100% groundwater going forward.

This step comes after several weeks of system stress-testing, integration work, and refi
and with our partners at the Rockwood Water District.

For most, this transition will not change day-to-day operations. The water team will c
share updates as work progresses.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to reaching this milestone.

As a reminder, here are the call routing instructions to ensure consistent tracking an

Primary line for water related calls: x2626
(Debbie Pryse & Katelyn Hogan – Operations Center)

Secondary Transfer Line: 2525
(Addie Gothro, Eric Jones, Heather Wendler, and Sarah White – Environmental Servi

This Water Quality Frontline Team will be tracking all water quality-related calls during

Resources
For background information and FAQs, please reference:
Groundwater Alliance Project
Water Quality

Thank you!

com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=NLqFqBC2JUSxKecOdWwXVDhJarU1JZBCjNYkgOvk6bdUNEM0UVNTNkg2MTVERjNSOEczSE5CS0FRTSQlQCN0PWcu

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CASCADE GROUNDWATER ALLIANCE CALL LOG

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

1. Water Provider *
   - Gresham
   - Rockwood

2. Customer service representative (who is taking the call) *
   Enter your answer

3. Customer Name *
   Enter your answer

4. Customer Type *
   - Single family residential customer
   - Multi-family residential customer

Consistent and ongoing communications keeps customer facing teams up-to-date, prepared and on message.

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Repetition reinforces the project's value across channels



Integrated communications campaign began in 2019 and is ongoing

- Website
- Newsletters
- Social Media
- Events
- Direct Mail
- Utility Bill Inserts
- Business Outreach

Integrated Messaging Campaign



Social Media



Newsletter



Fact sheets

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Targeted Communications to Residential Customers Since 2019



A new water system is coming soon

Gresham and Rockwood Water will begin moving to all groundwater in late fall 2025

Our groundwater comes from the deep, naturally protected Sand and Gravel Aquifer. It's a year-round source of safe, reliable, high-quality drinking water used by Rockwood, Gresham, and other local communities.

Your water system is expanding

Starting in late fall 2025, Gresham and Rockwood will start delivering groundwater from the new Cascade Groundwater Alliance facilities with the goal of 100 percent groundwater by June 2026. These earthquake-resilient facilities will deliver 25 million gallons of safe, high-quality water a day for our community. Some customers may notice slight differences in their water

Our Water. Our Future.

Water at the tap will be 100 percent groundwater in June 2026. Your water will be continually tested and monitored before, during, and after the transition and will continue to be safe to drink all day, every day.

About the Cascade Groundwater Alliance

The Cascade Groundwater Alliance is a partnership between the City of Gresham and Rockwood Water People's Utility District to build and operate an independent, safe, and reliable water system

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Benefits to you, our water customer

WATER QUALITY

BEST VALUE

LOCAL OWNERSHIP

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- High-quality, safe groundwater year-round.
- Locally owned, controlled and operated for customers in East Multnomah County.
- Shared ownership, costs and resources mean long-term stable and predictable costs for Gresham and Rockwood customers.
- Modern water treatment facilities with capacity to expand builds resilience and prepares us for current and future water needs.

Learn more:

City of Gresham
Phone: 503-618-2525
Email: WaterResources@GreshamOregon.gov
Web: **GreshamOregon.gov/Cascade-Groundwater-Alliance**

Rockwood People's Utility District
Phone: 503-665-4179
Email: Customerservice@rwpud.org
Web: **rwpud.org/cascade-groundwater-alliance**

Para más información en español, llame al 503-618-2525. Для получения дополнительной информации на Русском языке звоните 503-618-2525.



GRESHAM

A NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS — SPRING 2026

A historic moment on tap

Go ahead, raise a glass, Gresham!

A major milestone is almost here. The City and Rockwood Water People's Utility District are partnering to deliver a safe, reliable and independent water system for the community.

In June, the transition to 100% groundwater will be complete. The expanded system will produce 25 million gallons of clean, refreshing drinking water every day.

"This historic investment will benefit our community for years to come," said Mayor Travis Stovall. "On time and on budget, this project reflects our shared vision to provide water independently and create a future with smaller rate increases, not larger ones."

Community members who attended this winter's open house were eager to learn more and to take a sip.

"I thought the tap water was tasty, I wanted more," said Heather Coleman-Cox, Gresham-Barlow School Board director. "It's a smart move," she added. "It gives us control over a natural resource and I'm glad Gresham is doing this."

Santi Baldock, a Mt. Hood Community College student, said he was surprised to learn many regional water providers use groundwater. He also learned groundwater often requires less treatment than surface water.

Why it matters

Water independence means:

- High-quality groundwater year-round.
- Lower long-term rates.
- Shared costs that save money.
- Stronger, earthquake-resistant reservoirs and pipes.
- Local control over water decisions.

Why groundwater?

Groundwater is a safe, reliable and abundant source in this region. Gresham draws from the deep Sand and Gravel Aquifer, protected by thick layers of clay and silt.

The aquifer has supplied high-quality drinking water to more than 1 million people in the region for decades.

Learn more at **GreshamOregon.gov/Cascade-Groundwater-Alliance** or call 503-618-2626.

Inside the new Cascade Water Treatment Plant, Andy Cocker, district superintendent for Rockwood Water, explains the facility's high-tech filtration system, including 120 blue pressure vessels that filter drinking water.

Delivering safe drinking water is a daily commitment to public service. The system is designed to ensure your water tastes great and meets or exceeds all state and federal drinking water standards.

Our water, our future

- **Our new state-of-the-art treatment facility** can produce 25 million gallons of water a day, with room to expand as our community grows.
- **Gresham's groundwater** comes from as deep as 1,400 feet below the surface, where thick layers of earth help protect it naturally.
- **We test your drinking water regularly** and meet strict standards under the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- **Our groundwater protection programs** are nationally recognized for preventing contamination and protecting water quality.

- **Smart financing is saving ratepayers millions.** Gresham and Rockwood secured $9 million in grants and federal funding, plus more than $90 million in low-interest federal loans for water infrastructure projects.

"We are fortunate with the amount of water flowing beneath us. The Sand and Gravel Aquifer recharges quickly, even when we're drawing the most water at the driest time."

– Mike Whiteley, Water Department Director

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GreshamOregon.gov
Facebook.com/CityofGresham
Instagram.com/CityofGresham
X.com/CityofGresham
Youtube.com/CityofGreshamOregon

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POSTAL CUSTOMER
ECRWSS

INSIDE THIS EDITION

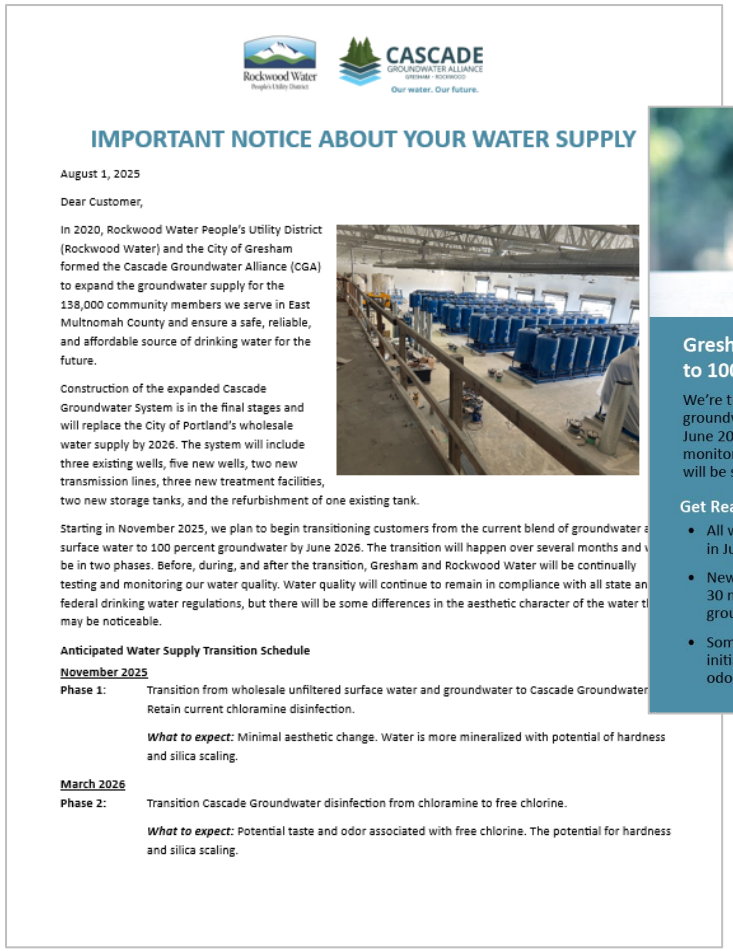
Spring events! Recycling Collection, Green and Clean, Mental Health Fair, Play Ball, and more. *Pages 4, 6, 8*

47 newsletter articles reaching 67,000 households each edition

Bill Inserts to both Rockwood and Gresham customers

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Targeted Communications For Businesses



Rockwood Water People's Utility District

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Our water. Our future.

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT YOUR WATER SUPPLY

August 1, 2025

Dear Customer,

In 2020, Rockwood Water People's Utility District (Rockwood Water) and the City of Gresham formed the Cascade Groundwater Alliance (CGA) to expand the groundwater supply for the 138,000 community members we serve in East Multnomah County and ensure a safe, reliable, and affordable source of drinking water for the future.

Construction of the expanded Cascade Groundwater System is in the final stages and will replace the City of Portland's wholesale water supply by 2026. The system will include three existing wells, five new wells, two new transmission lines, three new treatment facilities, two new storage tanks, and the refurbishment of one existing tank.

Starting in November 2025, we plan to begin transitioning customers from the current blend of groundwater a surface water to 100 percent groundwater by June 2026. The transition will happen over several months and v be in two phases. Before, during, and after the transition, Gresham and Rockwood Water will be continually testing and monitoring our water quality. Water quality will continue to remain in compliance with all state an federal drinking water regulations, but there will be some differences in the aesthetic character of the water t may be noticeable.

Anticipated Water Supply Transition Schedule

November 2025

Phase 1: Transition from wholesale unfiltered surface water and groundwater to Cascade Groundwater Retain current chloramine disinfection.

What to expect: Minimal aesthetic change. Water is more mineralized with potential of hardness and silica scaling.

March 2026

Phase 2: Transition Cascade Groundwater disinfection from chloramine to free chlorine.

What to expect: Potential taste and odor associated with free chlorine. The potential for hardness and silica scaling.



Benefits to Local Business Customers

- High-quality, safe groundwater year-round
- Locally owned, controlled and operated for customers in East Multnomah County
- Shared ownership, costs and resources mean long-term stable and predictable costs
- Modern water treatment facilities with capacity

Gresham and Rockwood Water tra to 100% groundwater in progress

We're transitioning from the current blend of groundwater and surface water to all groundw June 2026. Your water will be continually teste monitored before, during, and after the transi will be safe to drink all day, every day.

Get Ready – New System is Coming Online

- All water at the tap will be 100 percent gro in June 2026
- New earthquake-resilient facilities will deli 30 million gallons per day of safe, high-qua groundwater
- Some customers may notice changes in the initially such as slight hardness, color, taste odor, most will not. This is normal.

What businesses should do to prepare for the transition

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Operations System Checklist

If your business uses any of the equipment below, check the manufacturers' user guide or with your maintenance professional regarding any adjustments or maintenance your business must make to accommodate the switch to all groundwater and changes in water hardness

- ☐ **Boilers and hot water systems**
- ☐ **Chillers and cooling towers**
- ☐ **Commercial dishwashers, coffee machines, and ice makers**
- ☐ **Commercial laundry and cleaning systems**
- ☐ **Steamers, humidifiers, or sterilizers**
- ☐ **Manufacturing or process water systems**
- ☐ **Medical devices such as dialysis equipment**

Scan for water hardness information and other water quality details

We're Here to Help

We want to make this transition smooth for everyone. Please contact us or visit our website for additional water quality information, FAQs, and other information about the transition to groundwater.

Rockwood Water People's Utility District
Web: rwpud.org/cascade-groundwater-alliance
Phone: 503-665-4179
Email: Customerservice@rwpud.org

1,100 letters sent to Significant Industrial Users (SIUs) and commercial establishments

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Community Events







Participated in more than 20 community events

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CGA Events









Water tasting and ribbon-cutting events

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Results

- Internal teams aligned and equipped to transition to groundwater
- Solid community awareness
- Positive support from leadership and the public
- Little to no opposition



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Key Take Aways and Lessons Learned During Transition

- Starting early with a campaign approach to tell your story pays dividends
- Partnership is key
  - Align messaging across organizations
  - Leverage each other's strengths
  - Share what you're hearing in the field and lessons learned
- Customer service team members are your best messengers
  - Train your team on messaging
  - Stay in step with them
  - Enlist them to share intel on customer experience

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Questions?

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Thank You!

Rockwood Water People's Utility District

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