



Whitney Benefits offers more water for city parks

- City to continue voluntary water restrictions

By Pat Blair

Senior staff reporter

The city of Sheridan will continue voluntary water restrictions for the foreseeable future — and will consider an offer from Whitney Benefits that would make more than 27 million gallons of water available to keep the city's parks and recreational areas green for the remainder of the summer.

Council action, and the Whitney offer, came during Monday night's City Council meeting at City Hall.

Mike Cole, city utilities engineer, recommended continuation of voluntary restrictions that the city initiated two weeks ago.

The restrictions, part of the city's Drought Response Plan, call for city water users to water yards only between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. two days a week — Monday and Thursday for individuals with odd-numbered addresses and Tuesday and Friday for those with even-numbered addresses.

The restrictions apply to residents of the Downer Addition — which purchases city water to resell to residents of that area.

Cole said voluntary water restrictions in the past two weeks have reduced demand for city water by 15 percent. That, together with the city's stored-water supply in Twin Lake, will be sufficient, he said, to ensure an adequate supply for the rest of the summer if the city's water rights in Big Goose Creek are called out of priority.

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Water

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The city's rights to water from Big Goose Creek — which is the primary source of the municipal water supply — are junior to several upstream irrigators.

Cole said the city received notice from the state engineer's office about three weeks ago that the city's water rights "would probably" be called out of priority within the next few weeks to meet the demands of senior rights-holders.

As of Monday, Cole said, the city has not been called out of priority, and the city has in fact been releasing some water from Twin Lake to bolster the stream flow in Big Goose.

Cole said the critical date is Sept. 30. That's when irrigators generally "shut off," he said, and by Oct. 1, water rights are not an issue until the next irrigation season.

In related action, Roy Garber, vice president of the Whitney Benefits board of trustees, said the nonprofit organization is offering to expand its gift to the city of water from Park Reservoir from the current 19.9 million gallons to a total 27.76 million gallons.

Whitney is providing the water for the "greening" of the city's parks and recreation areas, including not only Kendrick, Thorne-Rider and Washington parks, but also the numerous neighborhood parks around the city.

Garber said the 27.76 million gallons equals 60 shares of Park Reservoir water that Whitney Benefits owns. Of that 60 shares,

Whitney Benefits would use 17 shares for Whitney Commons, the YMCA soccer fields, "and other Whitney properties," according to a news release presented at the council meeting.

The 60 shares are an increase of 20 shares over the number originally gifted to the city by Whitney Benefits for parks irrigation.



Kathy Kennedy
City Councilwoman

Councilwoman Kathy Kennedy noted during Garber's presentation that she has received "a lot of calls" from city residents asking why the city continues to water its parks while placing private citizens on water restrictions.

The reason, Kennedy noted, is that water for the parks is coming from Park Reservoir through Whitney Benefits' donation.

In exchange for the free untreated water for city parks, Whitney is asking the city to provide treated water for the interactive park water feature at Whitney Commons.

Also at Monday's meeting, the City Council authorized an application to the Wyoming Water Development Commission for a Level III grant to fund design and construction of several treated-water supply and storage projects for the city.

Those projects include:

- Rehabilitation of an existing raw water transmission pipeline between the city's intake facility and the Big Goose Water Treatment Plant and rehabilitation of a separate treated water transmission line between the city's North Low reservoirs and the reservoirs at Sheridan County Airport. Cost of this project was estimated at \$890,500 in 2002.

- Installation of a treated water reservoir of 1.5 million gallons capacity near the Big Goose Water Treatment Plant. Cost was estimated at \$1.84 million in 2002.

- Alternative water supply, storage and treatment facilities for northeast Sheridan. No costs were estimated in 2005 when this project was originally proposed.

- A new treated water tank of 1 million gallon capacity northwest of the existing Sheridan Water Treatment Plant, along with a new pump station and three miles of new transmission lines to serve northwest Sheridan. Cost of this project was estimated at more than \$4.73 million in 2005.

The WWDC would finance 67 percent of the costs — which have not been updated to reflect current prices — and the city proposes to finance its share through water user fees, capital reserves, private development contributions, federal government funds and/or state and federal loans.