

# **Nooksack Tribe**

## **Sulwhanon Community**

### **2024 Water Quality Report**

#### **Is my water safe?**

We are pleased to present this year's Annual Water Quality Report (Consumer Confidence Report) as required by the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). This report is designed to provide details about where your water comes from, what it contains, and how it compares to standards set by regulatory agencies. This report is a snapshot of last year's water quality. We are committed to providing you with information because informed customers are our best allies.

#### **Do I need to take special precautions?**

Some people may be more vulnerable to contaminants in drinking water than the general population. Immuno-compromised persons such as persons with cancer undergoing chemotherapy, persons who have undergone organ transplants, people with HIV/AIDS or other immune system disorders, some elderly, and infants can be particularly at risk from infections. These people should seek advice about drinking water from their health care providers. EPA/Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines on appropriate means to lessen the risk of infection by *Cryptosporidium* and other microbial contaminants are available from the Safe Water Drinking Hotline (800-426-4791).

#### **Where does my water come from?**

The Sulwhanon community water system serves the Housing Units, the Community Building, and several other non-residential units. The Sulwhanon Housing Development water system is supplied by one groundwater well, Well #1. In 2012 it was combined with the Genesis II Water System and Well #2. The Genesis II recovery center was vacated and is now being used as a tribal office. The system is now solely using Sulwhanon Well #1. Well #1 will be decommissioned once a new well is drilled via IHS Project PO-21-N13.

#### **Why are there contaminants in my drinking water?**

Drinking water, including bottled water, may reasonably be expected to contain at least small amounts of some contaminants. The presence of contaminants does not necessarily indicate that water poses a health risk. More information about contaminants and potential health effects can be obtained by calling the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Safe Drinking Water Hotline (800-426-4791).

Sources of drinking water (both tap water and bottled water) include rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, springs, and wells. As water travels over the surface of the land or through the ground, it dissolves naturally occurring minerals and, in some cases, radioactive material, and can pick up substances resulting from the presence of animals or from human activity:

- Microbial contaminants, such as viruses and bacteria, that may come from sewage treatment plants, septic systems, agricultural livestock operations, and wildlife
- Inorganic contaminants, such as salts and metals, which can be naturally occurring or result from urban stormwater runoff, industrial, or domestic wastewater discharges, oil and gas production, mining, or farming
- Pesticides and herbicides, which may come from a variety of sources such as agriculture, urban stormwater runoff, and residential uses

- Organic contaminants, including synthetic and volatile organic chemicals, which are by-products of industrial processes and petroleum production or gas stations, urban stormwater runoff, and septic systems
- Radioactive contaminants, which can be naturally occurring or be the result of oil and gas production and mining activities

In order to ensure that tap water is safe to drink, EPA sets regulations that limit contaminants in tap water. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations establish limits for contaminants in bottled water which must provide the same protection for public health.

### **How can I get involved?**

Contact your water system.

### **Description of Water Treatment Process**

Your water is treated by disinfection. Disinfection involves the addition of chlorine or other disinfectant to kill dangerous bacteria and microorganisms that may be in the water. Disinfection is considered to be one of the major public health advances of the 20th century.

### **Water Conservation Tips**

Did you know that the average U.S. household uses approximately 400 gallons of water per day or 100 gallons per person per day? Luckily, there are many low-cost and no-cost ways to conserve water. Small changes can make a big difference - try one today and soon it will become second nature.

- Take short showers - a 5-minute shower uses 4 to 5 gallons of water compared to up to 50 gallons for a bath.
- Shut off water while brushing your teeth, washing your hair and shaving and save up to 500 gallons a month.
- Use a water-efficient showerhead. They're inexpensive, easy to install, and can save you up to 750 gallons a month.
- Run your clothes washer and dishwasher only when they are full. You can save up to 1,000 gallons a month.
- Water plants only when necessary.
- Fix leaky toilets and faucets. Faucet washers are inexpensive and take only a few minutes to replace. To check your toilet for a leak, place a few drops of food coloring in the tank and wait. If it seeps into the toilet bowl without flushing, you have a leak. Fixing it or replacing it with a new, more efficient model can save up to 1,000 gallons a month.
- Adjust sprinklers so only your lawn is watered. Apply water only as fast as the soil can absorb it and during the cooler parts of the day to reduce evaporation.
- Teach your kids about water conservation to ensure a future generation that uses water wisely. Make it a family effort to reduce next month's water bill!
- Visit [www.epa.gov/watersense](http://www.epa.gov/watersense) for more information.

### **Cross Connection Control Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to determine whether a cross-connection may exist at your home or business. A cross connection is an unprotected or improper connection to a public water distribution system that may cause contamination or pollution to enter the system. We are responsible for enforcing cross-connection control regulations and insuring that no contaminants can, under any flow conditions, enter the distribution system. If you have any of the devices listed below please contact us so that we can discuss the issue, and if needed, survey your connection and assist you in isolating it if that is necessary.

- Boiler/ Radiant heater (water heaters not included)
- Underground lawn sprinkler system
- Pool or hot tub (whirlpool tubs not included)
- Additional source(s) of water on the property
- Decorative pond
- Watering trough

### **Source Water Protection Tips**

Protection of drinking water is everyone's responsibility. You can help protect your community's drinking water source in several ways:

- Eliminate excess use of lawn and garden fertilizers and pesticides - they contain hazardous chemicals that can reach your drinking water source.
- Pick up after your pets.
- If you have your own septic system, properly maintain your system to reduce leaching to water sources or consider connecting to a public water system.
- Dispose of chemicals properly; take used motor oil to a recycling center.
- Volunteer in your community. Find a watershed or wellhead protection organization in your community and volunteer to help. If there are no active groups, consider starting one. Use EPA's Adopt Your Watershed to locate groups in your community, or visit the Watershed Information Network's How to Start a Watershed Team.
- Organize a storm drain stenciling project with your local government or water supplier. Stencil a message next to the street drain reminding people "Dump No Waste - Drains to River" or "Protect Your Water." Produce and distribute a flyer for households to remind residents that storm drains dump directly into your local water body.

### **Significant Deficiencies**

A significant deficiency can include a flaw in design, operation, or maintenance, or a failure or malfunction of the sources, treatment, storage, or distribution system that EPA determines to be causing, or has the potential for introducing contamination into the water delivered to consumers.

#### Groundwater Source

- Well #1 is less than 100-feet from an individual home septic tank and disposal field. This was identified on 2/22/2016 and is scheduled to be addressed through IHS Project PO-20-N02.
- Well #1 cannot be pumped to waste at the design capacity of the well via an approved air gap at a location prior to the first service connection and is scheduled to be addressed through IHS Project PO-20-N02.
- Well #1 (WL-01) is not protected against flooding. The close proximity of the retaining pond to the well and pump house may impact that ability for this well to produce safe water. The separation between the water treatment backwash and the well should be ideally 100 feet or greater and should be designed so backwash flows away from the well. Also, generally discharge of backwash to surface is not recommended and may cause Clean Water Act or other violations. This was identified on 8/27/2019 and is scheduled to be decommissioned through IHS Project PO-20-N02.
- Well #2, there is no sample tap provided on the discharge pipe prior to treatment. This was identified on 8/27/2019 and was scheduled to be addressed by late 2025 through IHS Project PO-20-N02.
- Well #2 cannot be pumped to waste at the design capacity of the well via an approved air gap at a location prior to the first service connection and is scheduled to be addressed by late 2025 through IHS Project PO-20-N02.

### **Additional Information for Lead**

The Nooksack Tribe Water Department prepared a service line inventory for EPA review and results are posted on the following website: <https://nooksacktribe.org/water-department/>.

Lead can cause serious health problems, especially for pregnant women and young children. Lead in drinking water is primarily from materials and components associated with service lines and home plumbing. The Nooksack Water Department is responsible for providing high quality drinking water and removing lead pipes, but cannot control the variety of materials used in plumbing components in your home. You share the responsibility for protecting yourself and your family from the lead in your home plumbing. You can take responsibility by identifying and removing lead materials within your home plumbing and taking steps to reduce your family's risk. Before drinking tap water, flush your pipes for several minutes by running your tap, taking a shower, doing laundry or a load of dishes. You can also use a filter certified by an American National Standards Institute accredited certifier to reduce lead in drinking water. If you are concerned about lead in your water and wish to have your water tested, contact the Nooksack Water Department. Information on lead in drinking water, testing methods, and steps you can take to minimize exposure is available at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lead>.

### **Additional information for Nitrate**

Even though the Sulwhanon water system meets the EPA nitrate drinking water standard, also known as a Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), if you are caring for an infant and using tap water to prepare formula, you may want to use alternate sources of water or ask for advice from your health care provider. Nitrate levels above 10 ppm pose a particularly high health concern for infants under 6 months of age and can interfere with the capacity of the infant's blood to carry oxygen, resulting in a serious illness. Symptoms of serious illness include shortness of breath and blueness of the skin, known as "blue baby syndrome." Nitrate levels in drinking water can increase for short periods of time due to high levels of rainfall or agricultural activity, therefore we test for nitrate every three months. The highest level for nitrate found during 2024 was 0.86 ppm.

**For more information please contact:**

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# Water Quality Data Table

In order to ensure tap water is safe to drink, EPA sets regulations to limit contaminants in water provided by public water systems. The table below lists drinking water contaminants that were detected during 2024. Many more contaminants were tested but only the substances listed below were found in your water.

All sources of drinking water contain naturally occurring compounds. At low levels, these substances are generally not harmful. Removing all contaminants would be extremely expensive, and in most cases, would not provide increased protection of public health. A few naturally occurring minerals may improve the taste of drinking water and have nutritional value at low levels.

The EPA or the State requires us to monitor for certain contaminants less than once per year because the concentrations of these contaminants do not vary significantly year to year or the system is not considered vulnerable to this type of contamination. To help you better understand terms and abbreviations that might not be familiar to you, below are definitions.

Unit Descriptions	
Term	Definition
ppm	ppm: parts per million, or milligrams per liter (mg/L)
ppb	ppb: parts per billion, or micrograms per liter (µg/L)
mrem	millirems per year (a measure of radiation absorbed by the body)
pCi/L	Picocuries per Liter: a measure of the radioactivity in water
NA	NA: not applicable
ND	ND: Not detected
NR	NR: Monitoring not required, but recommended.

Important Drinking Water Definitions	
Term	Definition
AVG	Regulatory compliance with some MCLs are based on running annual average of monthly samples.
MCLG	MCLG: Maximum Contaminant Level Goal: The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MCLGs allow for a margin of safety.
MCL	MCL: Maximum Contaminant Level: The highest level of a contaminant that is allowed in drinking water. MCLs are set as close to the MCLGs as feasible using the best available treatment technology.
TT	TT: Treatment Technique: A required process intended to reduce the level of a contaminant in drinking water.
AL	AL: Action Level: The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.
Variances and Exemptions	Variances and Exemptions: State or EPA permission not to meet an MCL or a treatment technique under certain conditions.
MRDLG	MRDLG: Maximum residual disinfection level goal. The level of a drinking water disinfectant below which there is no known or expected risk to health. MRDLGs do not reflect the benefits of the use of disinfectants to control microbial contaminants.

Important Drinking Water Definitions	
MRDL	MRDL: Maximum residual disinfectant level. The highest level of a disinfectant allowed in drinking water. There is convincing evidence that addition of a disinfectant is necessary for control of microbial contaminants.
MNR	MNR: Monitored Not Regulated
MPL	MPL: State Assigned Maximum Permissible Level
Level 1 Assessment	A Level 1 assessment is a study of the water system to identify potential problems and determine (if possible) why total coliform bacteria have been found in our water system.
Level 2 Assessment:	A Level 2 assessment is a very detailed study of the water system to identify potential problems and determine (if possible) why an E. coli MCL violation has occurred and/or why total coliform bacteria have been found in our water system on multiple occasions.

2024 Regulated Contaminants Detected

Lead and Copper

Definitions:

Action Level: The concentration of a contaminant which, if exceeded, triggers treatment or other requirements which a water system must follow.

Action Level Goal (ALG): The level of a contaminant in drinking water below which there is no known or expected risk to health. ALGs allow for a margin of safety.

Lead and Copper	Date Sampled	MCLG	Action Level (AL)	90th Percentile	# Sites Over AL	Units	Violation	Likely Source of Contamination
Copper	2024	1.3	1.3	0.0251	0	ppm	N	Erosion of natural deposits; Leaching from wood preservatives; Corrosion of household plumbing systems.
Lead	2024	0	15	1.7	0	ppb	N	Corrosion of household plumbing systems; Erosion of natural deposits.

Regulated Contaminants

Disinfectants and Disinfection By-Products	Collection Date	Highest Level Detected	Range of Levels Detected	MCLG	MCL	Units	Violation	Likely Source of Contamination
Chlorine	2024	0.3	0.2-0.3	MRDLG = 4	MRDL = 4	ppm	N	Water additive used to control microbes.
Inorganic Contaminants	Collection Date	Highest Level Detected	Range of Levels Detected	MCLG	MCL	Units	Violation	Likely Source of Contamination
Barium	2024	0.0375	0.0375 - 0.0375	2	2	ppm	N	Discharge of drilling wastes; Discharge from metal refineries; Erosion of natural deposits.
Fluoride	2024	0.12	0.12-0.12	4	4.0	ppm	N	Erosion of natural deposits; Water additive which promotes strong teeth; Discharge from fertilizer and aluminum factories.
Nitrate [measured as Nitrogen]	2024	1	0 - 0.86	10	10	ppm	N	Runoff from fertilizer use; Leaching from septic tanks, sewage; Erosion of natural deposits.
Radioactive Contaminants	Collection Date	Highest Level Detected	Range of Levels Detected	MCLG	MCL	Units	Violation	Likely Source of Contamination
Combined Radium 226/228	8/31/2020	1.5	1.5 - 1.5	0	5	pCi/L	N	Erosion of natural deposits.

## Violations Table

E. Coli			
Fecal coliforms and E. coli are bacteria whose presence indicates that the water may be contaminated with human or animal wastes. Microbes in these wastes can cause short-term effects, such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, headaches, or other symptoms. They may pose a special health risk for infants, young children, and people with severely compromised immune systems.			
Violation Type	Violation Begin	Violation End	Violation Explanation
Monitor GWR Triggered/Additional Major	8/16/2023	8/15/2024	We failed to collect follow-up samples within 24 hours of learning of the total coliform-positive sample. These needed to be tested for fecal indicators from all sources that were being used at the time the positive sample was collected.

Lead and Copper Rule			
The Lead and Copper Rule protects public health by minimizing lead and copper levels in drinking water, primarily by reducing water corrosivity. Lead and copper enter drinking water mainly from corrosion of lead and copper containing plumbing materials.			
Violation Type	Violation Begin	Violation End	Violation Explanation
Follow-up or Routine Tap M/R (LCR)	7/1/2023	2/14/2024	We failed to test our drinking water for the contaminant and period indicated. Because of this failure, we cannot be sure of the quality of our drinking water during the period indicated.
Follow-up or Routine Tap M/R (LCR)	1/1/2024	2/14/2024	We failed to test our drinking water for the contaminant and period indicated. Because of this failure, we cannot be sure of the quality of our drinking water during the period indicated.
Initial Tap Sampling (LCR)	1/1/2022	2/14/2024	We failed to test our drinking water for the contaminant and period indicated. Because of this failure, we cannot be sure of the quality of our drinking water during the period indicated.
Initial Tap Sampling (LCR)	7/1/2022	2/14/2024	We failed to test our drinking water for the contaminant and period indicated. Because of this failure, we cannot be sure of the quality of our drinking water during the period indicated.
Initial Tap Sampling (LCR)	1/1/2023	2/14/2024	We failed to test our drinking water for the contaminant and period indicated. Because of this failure, we cannot be sure of the quality of our drinking water during the period indicated.
Lead Consumer Notice (LCR)	4/2/2020	7/11/2024	We failed to provide the results of lead tap water monitoring to the consumers at the location water was tested. These were supposed to be provided no later than 30 days after learning the results.
Lead Consumer Notice (LCR)	1/31/2021	7/11/2024	We failed to provide the results of lead tap water monitoring to the consumers at the location water was tested. These were supposed to be provided no later than 30 days after learning the results.

Nitrate (measured as Nitrogen)			
Infants below the age of six months who drink water containing nitrate in excess of the MCL could become seriously ill and, if untreated, may die. Symptoms include shortness of breath and blue-baby syndrome.			
Violation Type	Violation Begin	Violation End	Violation Explanation
Monitoring, Routine Major	1/1/2024	3/1/2024	We failed to test our drinking water for the contaminant and period indicated. Because of this failure, we cannot be sure of the quality of our drinking water during the period indicated.