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This Assistance Bulletin only applies to property within unincorporated Snohomish County and does not apply to property within incorporated city limits.

Coordinated Water System Plan Implementation

Assistance Bulletin

#97

Revised June 2016

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Keyword: Assistance Bulletins

I. Water Utility Service Areas

Q: What is a service area?

A: The North Snohomish County Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP) defines by map location the geographical service areas of those systems serving ten connections or more. The CWSP “designates” these areas for each utility. Maps showing the location of these designated service areas are on file with Planning and Development Services and also are available on our website at: http://www.snoco.org/docs/scd/PDF/PDS_Water/CWSP_North_Snohomish_County_2016update.pdf.

Q: What is the significance of a designated service area?

A: Utilities with fifty connections or more and those smaller utilities proposing to expand their systems were initially asked to sign service area agreements as part of the CWSP development process. The utility then received exclusive right to serve new developments proposed within their designated area. The utility would also accept responsibility for providing timely and reasonable water service to new customers.

Q: What happens if a water purveyor wants to change a designated service area?

A: The water purveyor must contact Planning and Development Services (PDS) about the proposed change and provide documentation that adjacent water purveyors agree with the proposed changes. A map or other cartographic data must also be provided to PDS for inclusion into the CWSP map.

Q: Do the smaller systems have designated service areas?

A: Only those systems with fifty connections or more and smaller expanding systems must sign agreements. Current, but undefined, service areas are preserved as their geographic area of responsibility and operation for all other utilities.

II. Utility Service Review Procedure

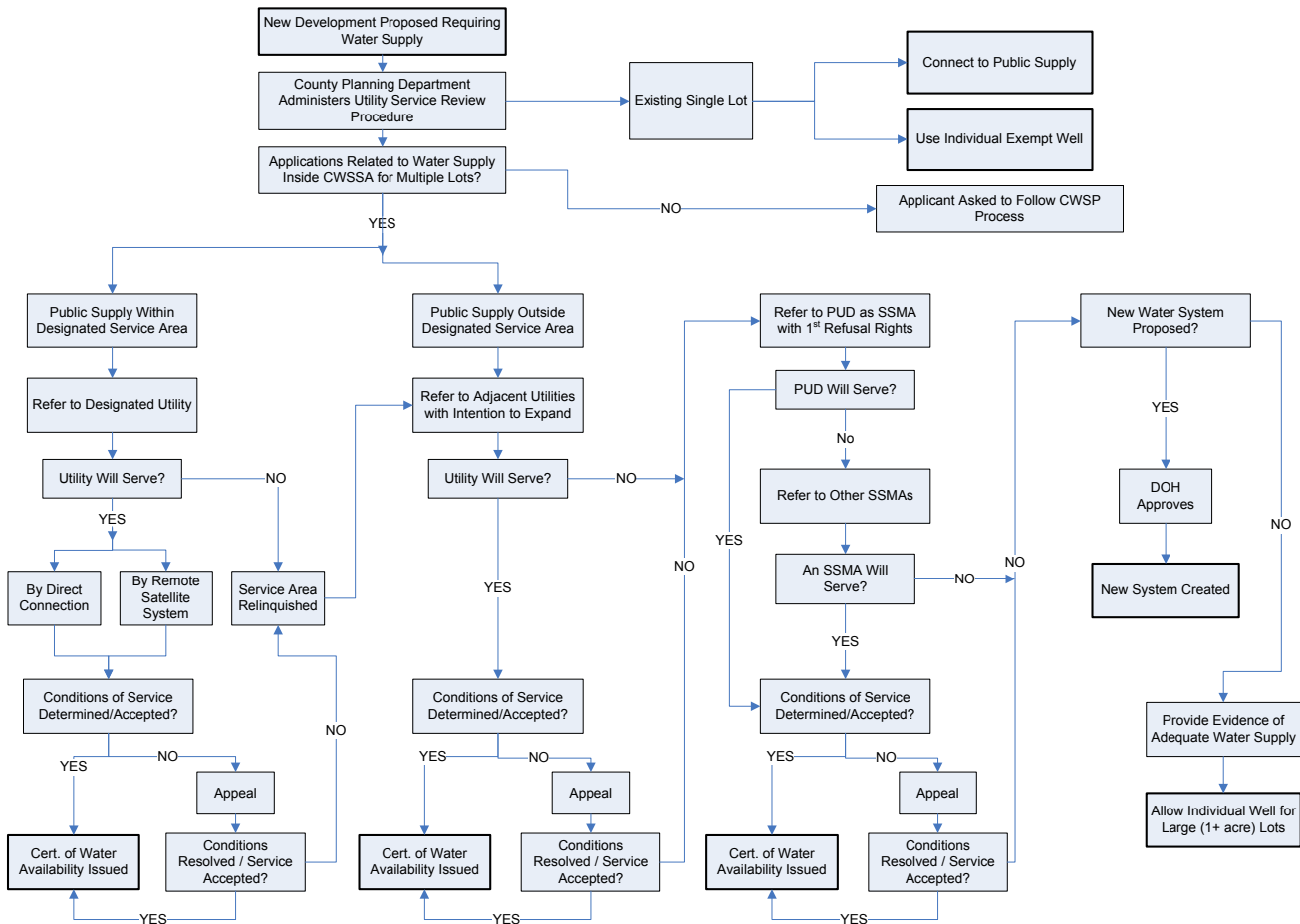
Q: What happens when a proposed development requires new water service?

A: The CWSP requires that new water service within designated service areas be obtained from the designated utility, when that service is timely and reasonable.

This bulletin is intended only as an information guide. The information may not be complete and is subject to change. For complete legal information, refer to Snohomish County Code.

The CWSP established a “referral” process administered by Snohomish County. A flow chart of the process is shown below. This process is triggered by the receipt of a development proposal (e.g., building permit or subdivision application) by PDS. The county should refer the developer to the corresponding utility within a designated service area to negotiate a water service agreement.

Figure V-1: Utility Service Review Procedure



Q: Does the referral process apply outside of designated service areas?

A: Yes. The plan provides that for proposed developments located outside of designated service areas, PDS or Snohomish Health District will first identify and refer the developer to adjacent utilities with approved water system plans that provide for expansion. These utilities have the first option to provide service through ownership or operational responsibility of the water system. Should no such utilities exist or adjacent systems decline to provide service, the developer will be referred to the Snohomish County PUD. If neither the adjacent system nor the PUD will provide service, the developer may create a new system.

Q: Must service be provided by extending water lines?

A: Not necessarily. Extension of existing water lines is generally preferable. However, if the proposed development is distant from the current facilities, a “remote” system may be developed. This could be a well system that is separate from the primary system but may be interconnected at a future date.

Q: Must a developer accept the terms of service of the designated water utility?

A: No, the CWSP provides that service must be provided in a timely and reasonable manner. If the developer and utility disagree on the conditions of service, the appeal process provided in the plan may be used to resolve the dispute. PDS should be consulted for explanation of this process.

Q: Does the referral process apply to building permits for individual/single family water supply?

A: Yes, in a limited way. When the proposed single family home is within a designated service area, PDS or Snohomish Health District will refer the developer to the utility for consideration of public water service. Acceptance of service is totally optional to the building permit applicant, even if the utility is willing to provide service. The purpose of the referral is to assure that the applicant has considered the merits of public service as opposed to a private supply. If the applicant declines service, the Snohomish Health District would begin normal processing of a request for private water supply.

III. Utilities' Water System Plans

Q: How are individual utility water system plans affected by the CWSP?

A: State law requires (with one exception*) that all utilities within the external boundaries of the CWSP planning area prepare a water system plan for their service area. An update may only be required to incorporate appropriate elements of the CWSP where plans currently exist. Department of Health (DOH) is to specify the plan requirements for new plans, based on the size of the system.

Q: *What is the one exception?

A: Non-municipally-owned public water systems that existed prior to September 21, 1977, which have met State Board of Health requirements and which do not plan to expand their service area, are exempt from the water system plan requirement.

IV. Additional Background

The CWSP goal is to optimize the delivery of a safe and reliable supply of water for public use through cooperative planning, development, operation, and management of public water supply systems.

A public water system is defined by the DOH as a system that furnishes drinking water to any community or number of individuals or that is made available to the public for human consumption and domestic use. A public water system includes service to two or more residences but excludes water supplies serving a single residence.

The CWSP does the following:

Establishes service areas for public water utilities:

- Sets forth a procedure for determining which utility will serve proposed new development.
- Defines the conditions under which a new public water system may be recreated.
- Creates a local level review panel and process for resolution of appeals related to implementation of the CWSP.
- Establishes minimum design standards for the expansion of existing or development of new systems.
- Describes a water conservation program to be implemented by the water utilities.
- Maintains a Joint Operating Agreement (JOA) among the city of Marysville, Tulalip Tribes, and Public Utility District No. 1 of Snohomish County (PUD) for construction of a new water transmission line to serve the three entities from the city of Everett system.

Q: Does the CWSP have legal standing?

A: Yes, preparation and implementation of the plan is authorized by state law (Chapter 70.116 RCW – Public Water System Coordination Act of 1977).

Q: Who prepared the plan?

A: The CWSP was prepared by PDS with direction from the Water Utility Coordinating Committee (WUCC). Committee members included representatives of public water systems with fifty connections or more, Snohomish County Planning and Development Services, the Snohomish Health District, and the Washington State Department of Health (DOH).

Q: Has the plan been adopted?

A: Yes, the Snohomish County Council has certified the CWSP for consistency with county land use plans and policies, and the DOH approved the plan on January 5, 2011.

Q: Will the CWSP be updated?

A: The CWSP must be reviewed and updated by the WUCC every five years, or sooner, if necessary in accordance with the provisions of the Public Water System Coordination Act.

Q: Where can I obtain additional information?

A: Contacts for specific information regarding the CWSP:

Snohomish County Planning and Development Services
Phone: (425) 388.3311, ask for Capital Facilities Planner

Washington State Department of Health
Northwest Drinking Water Regional Operations
Phone: (253) 395.6750

Copies of the CWSP are on file at the above offices and with each water utility that is a member of the WUCC. The CWSP is also available on the county website @ www.snohomishcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/8619.
