



The City of Bremerton is pleased to serve you. For more information, please visit www.BremertonWA.gov or call the City of Bremerton Customer Response Line (360) 473-5920, the Kitsap Public Health District (360) 728-2235, Washington State Department of Health (360) 236-3030, or the EPA Safe Drinking Water Hotline 1-800-426-4791.

FACTSHEET: Watershed Protection

“Where does Bremerton’s drinking water come from?”

Safe drinking water is essential to our health and the economy of our community. Bremerton has a remarkable resource – a clean, safe, protected drinking water supply provided by surface water from the Union River Reservoir and groundwater from deep wells in the community. All sources are protected and the water quality is so good that Bremerton is one of the few systems in the United States not required to filter its surface water.

“How does Bremerton maintain this pristine water source?”

Watershed protection is the first and most critical step to ensure a safe water supply. It is much healthier, easier, and environmentally sound to protect water quality to begin with than to treat it to remove contaminants after the fact. It is estimated that every dollar spent on watershed protection saves about \$40 in treatment costs. An amazing advantage that Bremerton has is that it owns and manages the 3,000 acres of protected watershed surrounding the Union River Reservoir. Early city managers had the foresight to protect these lands over 85 years ago, and we continue to protect them today through signs, locked gates, patrols by the Bremerton Police Department and Utility staff, surveillance cameras, and other methods. Because of this continued vigilance, Bremerton water customers enjoy high quality drinking water and low water rates that are the envy of other communities.

“Why is the City of Bremerton Union River watershed closed to the public?”

Bremerton’s watershed is not open to the public for your safety, for water quality protection, and to meet regulatory requirements. Instead of a costly filtration system, we rely on protection of our pristine watershed as the first step to ensure the cleanliness and safety of our drinking water. This is a mandate Bremerton takes seriously and must achieve to comply with strict water quality regulations. Public access is prohibited because these activities could contaminate the water or damage the natural processes within the watershed.

“I am just taking a walk or riding my bike – how can that hurt the watershed?”

Hiking, biking, and other activities may seem harmless but can take a surprising toll on surrounding lands. Additionally, not everyone is responsible. One careless cigarette could cause a large fire that would destroy the watershed’s ability to protect our water. There are no bathroom or trash facilities in the watershed. Human and dog waste contains a surprising amount of pathogens. Litter could pose a problem. Paths and bike trails can cause erosion. Seemingly innocent activities could bring in invasive species that could disrupt the health of the reservoir or forest. The more that people enter the watershed, the more that risks are posed to our exceptional water source, causing the city to expend resources to monitor and control these activities. We are fortunate to live in an area with many beautiful and appropriate places to enjoy nature. The Union River watershed is not an appropriate area for recreation and needs to be protected for the benefit of all Bremerton water customers.

“What would happen if the city could not adequately protect the watershed?”

Water systems that cannot protect their watershed must construct expensive treatment systems. In Bremerton, a filtration plant would cost over \$40 million to construct and over \$1 million a year to operate. This could double water rates.

