Media Release

Portland Water Bureau

For Immediate Release

June 29, 2021

For more information, contact Public Information at 503-823-8064.

**Water is Flowing from Washington Park Reservoir**

The Portland Water Bureau has achieved a major milestone – activating the 12.4-million-gallon reservoir at Washington Park. The first of two reservoir cells will be online and providing drinking water today! The second reservoir cell will provide drinking water to the west side of Portland in early July.

**NOTE: Video is available here:**

[youtube.com/watch?v=yjiRqbssSHY,](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjiRqbssSHY)

[youtube.com/watch?v=xggdlVOnIu](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xggdlVOnIuI)

**Photos are available here:** [Washington Park Reservoirs Digital Resources](https://www.portland.gov/water/improvements/washington-park-reservoir-improvement/wpr-overview#toc-digital-resources)

The Portland Water Bureau has worked for decades to upgrade our system to withstand earthquakes. This includes the new reservoirs at Kelly Butte and Powell Butte that store water on the east side. The Washington Park Reservoir Project is critical to our region's plan to provide water and recover economically after an earthquake.

“Activating the new reservoir at Washington Park brings us closer to our vision for a healthy, resilient Portland,” said Portland Water Bureau Chief Engineer Jodie Inman. “We are carefully investing your ratepayer dollars in a resilient water system today that can withstand a major quake to continue to provide drinking water, support economic recovery, and fight fires for generations to come.”

The last major concrete pour to build the Washington Park Reservoir was in December. Since then, crews have tested the reservoir cells to make sure they are sanitized and water tight. With this work completed, the first of two cells of the reservoir was put in use for drinking water and emergency planning on June 29. 

## What’s next

The new, seismically reinforced reservoir is now in service but work to replace the original 1894 reservoir continues at the site. Once completed, the new reservoir will retain the historic look and feel of the original, but it has been engineered with modern technology to withstand a major earthquake.

Over the next few months, additional soil will be placed on and around the new reservoir. Then, over the next two years, there will be a pause in construction to allow for soil to settle. Once the soil has settled, the bureau can begin to build a beautiful reflecting pool, a lowland habitat area and bioswale, and historic interpretive elements. During the construction pause, work will continue on the south side of the worksite to enhance safety features and [replace outdated mechanical systems inside of the hypochlorite building](https://www.portland.gov/water/improvements/washington-park-reservoir-improvement/construction/hypochlorite-building-upgrade). This allows us to add chlorination for the future reflecting pool on top of the reservoir. When this project is completed in 2025, the public will enjoy unprecedented access to the area surrounding the historic reservoirs.

## Project Facts

The Portland Water Bureau’s [Washington Park Reservoir Improvement Project](https://www.portland.gov/water/improvements/washington-park-reservoir-improvement/wpr-overview) is a key to seismically strengthening water infrastructure on Portland’s west side and helping to ensure a healthy, resilient, and secure water system.

* The reservoir stores 12.4 million gallons of water for drinking and fire suppression.
* The new reservoir has been reinforced to resist landslides and earthquakes.
* More than 360,000 people on the west side of the Willamette River receive water from the reservoir, including all downtown businesses and residents, 20 schools, five hospital complexes, more than 60 parks, and the Oregon Zoo.
* This project exceeded City goals for the number of women and minority apprentice hours: currently 55.07%, goal 31%.
* The project also exceeded City goals for the number of women and minority journey workers: currently 31.39%, goal 28%.

### About the Portland Water Bureau

The Portland Water Bureau serves water to almost a million people in the Portland area. Portland’s water system includes two great water sources, 53 tanks and reservoirs, and 2,200 miles of pipes. With 600 employees working on everything from water treatment to customer service, the Water Bureau is committed to serving excellent water every minute of every day.