



Port wins award for water system

The recently completed project in Burbank is in an area known for contaminated wells.

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By VICKI HILLHOUSE of the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

The Port of Walla Walla's recently completed water system at the Burbank industrial park has been showered with praise by the state Department of Health.

The state agency has lauded the Port with its "Going Above and Beyond Award" for providing safe and reliable drinking water in an area known for nitrate-contaminated wells. The award was expected to be presented this morning at the Burbank site, where the Port recently completed the \$3.5 million water system that serves its tenants, supplies the Columbia School District and will serve more than 100 residential customers when they connect to the system this summer.

"The Port went above and beyond meeting their own needs by expanding their water system to help the community solve a public health problem," said Denise Clifford, director of the state Health Department's Office of Drinking Water, in a prepared statement. "Thanks to their efforts, the Port's neighbors, including the kids at the Columbia School District, will have safe, reliable drinking water."

Engineering services firm Anderson Perry & Associates, which worked on the project, nominated the Port for the award, one of four presented by the Department of Health during Drinking Water Week. Others recognized are: the Drug Abuse Prevention Center in Cowlitz County, Brad Lake and Sean Bauer in Kent, Wash., and Cary Eller of Chelan County.

Construction on the water system began in 2008. With the help of a \$1.6 million state appropriation and a \$721,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Port's system includes a supply well, a 290,000-gallon water storage reservoir, a nitrate treatment system, a booster pump station and 2.6 miles of water distribution main.

In an announcement on the award, Port officials said Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., was instrumental in securing funding from the EPA. State funding was possible through the efforts of the late Rep. Bill Grant, D-Walla Walla, Sen. Mike Hewitt, R-Walla Walla, and Rep. Maureen Walsh, R-College Place.

The water system is the third such system owned and operated by the Port. The other two are at the Walla Walla Regional Airport and the Dodd Road Industrial Park. Construction of the newest system allowed the Columbia School District to cease use of its nitrate-contaminated wells. The district has more than 900 students and 120 staff. An additional roughly 100 residential customers of the Columbia View Water System plan to connect to the system in the coming summer months.

Port Commission President Fred Bennett said the water system is a necessary infrastructure investment to help recruit new industry.

"While the Port's mission is to create and retain jobs within the communities we serve, this is not possible without communities having a safe and reliable drinking water supply," Bennett said, in a prepared statement.

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