What is the Cascade Groundwater Alliance?

Rockwood Water and the City of Gresham formed the Cascade Groundwater Alliance to expand our groundwater systems together.

Why was the Cascade Groundwater Alliance formed?

Rockwood Water and the City of Gresham have formed an alliance to expand our groundwater supply to improve water supply resiliency for the region and avoid future wholesale water purchase cost increases from the City of Portland.

What is the Cascade Groundwater Alliance doing?

Rockwood Water is using the water rights it obtained many years ago to expand its groundwater supply system, in partnership with the City of Gresham, to meet the future water needs of Rockwood and Gresham customers. Sharing project costs and resources saves us money and will keep rates lower for our customers.

How do you develop more water supply?

Rockwood Water and the City of Gresham elected officials adopted the Groundwater Development Master Plan In October 2020. The Plan was developed by the engineering consultant, Murraysmith, and identifies and describes the Cascade Groundwater system as the best option for Rockwood Water and Gresham to develop their own supply, minimize future water rate increases, and reduce or eliminate our dependence on water purchased from the City of Portland through a wholesale contract. Groundwater development was identified as the best alternative for us to accomplish our goals.

What is groundwater?

Groundwater is fresh water from rain or melting ice and snow that soaks into the soil and is stored in the tiny spaces between rocks, particles of soil and sand underground much the same way that water fills a sponge. It is stored in and moves slowly through geologic formations called aquifers.

Where does our groundwater supply come from?

Rockwood Water and the City of Gresham pump groundwater from the Sand and Gravel Aquifer (SGA); the oldest (2 to 5 million years old) of the sedimentary aquifers in the Portland Basin. It's 450 feet to more than 1,400 feet below the surface where we currently have wells and planned wells.

Is using groundwater a new idea?

No. Groundwater has been a long-term water source for us. Rockwood Water built its first groundwater well in 1926 and has used groundwater to supply or augment supply for 76 years. The Cities of Gresham, Fairview, Milwaukie, Newberg, Portland, Troutdale, and Wood Village are a few of the cities in the region using groundwater. 38% of the U.S. population depends on groundwater for their drinking water supply either from a public source or a private well.

Is groundwater safe?

Yes! Here are several reasons why:

- The Sand and Gravel Aquifer is the deepest of the aquifers in the Portland Basin. It is naturally protected by two extensive low-permeability clay and silt layers that act as natural filters that remove impurities from the water. Wells will pull from a depth of 700 to 1,400 feet below the ground, making surface-level contamination unlikely.
- We have a nationally-recognized and award winning Groundwater Protection Program. This program mitigates surface-level contamination by working with businesses to protect our groundwater resources.
- We must abide by stringent regulations for potential contaminants. Public drinking water is regulated even more than the bottled water sold in stores. Regulations are set by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Oregon Health Authority under the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- We test our water for over 300 regulated and unregulated substances and report our test results to the Oregon Health Authority and our customers (contained in this document).
- We are building a treatment facility that will also be expandable to address future regulatory changes or a change in groundwater quality, if needed.

The Cascade Groundwater Alliance is committed to providing you with water that is safe to drink and meets all state and federal drinking water standards. We will continue to monitor and protect our valuable resource now, and for future generations, to deliver the highest quality water at the most affordable cost possible.