

Updated 7-20-2016 @ 1:15 p.m.

Questions have been asked of the public and we are working hard to answer those questions as soon as possible. If you have specific questions, please direct them to the Borough Clerk at clerk@wrangell.com

This Q&A page will be updated as information becomes available and will be posted with the *newest Q&A on top*.

7-21 Q [What was the response from the State?](#)

A The State said that this does not constitute a natural disaster so they cannot assist with funding. The State has assisted the City in reaching out to various State departments to see if they have resources or ideas that might help us.

7-21 Q [If we change the old sand with new sand would that help with the speed of filtration?](#)

A **Replacing the sand in the filters would probably be a benefit and improve the efficiency of the water plant. Because the plant was designed for cleaner water entering it to be treated, it was anticipated that sand would only need to be replaced periodically. Unfortunately, the water entering the plant is not clean and has a lot of sediment that has to be removed. This causes the sand filters to clog much more quickly. The reason the sand is not changed as often as it probably should is that it is specialized sand and is expensive. To replace all of the sand in all the filters could run into the \$500,000 range. Our normal operating budget for the water fund is between \$600,000 and \$700,000, so changing the sand every year as an example would require a rate increase of at least 80%. We instead have looked and adopted different ways to deal with it that are more economical for the rate payer, but maybe at the cost of some of our ability to produce water. The real solution is a new plant that uses a different technology that better suits our water.**

7-20 Q [Could I get a figure for how much water we have currently and our full storage capacity?](#)

A **A: Total storage capacity, between two tanks, is 853,083 gallons. Current availability of treated water changes constantly so there is no way to answer that question and it the same answer five minutes from now. Staff started the day with approximately 14' of water in both tanks.**

Follow-up: One foot is equal to a bit over 13,000 gallons in each tank. Not total.

- 7-20 Q [How long are the filters supposed to last before cleaning them?](#)
- A The plant was designed for the filters to last 3 months and be cleaned once a quarter. Because the sediment settles in the sand, the bio mat does not form and therefore they have to go in every few days with a 4 wheeler w/plow and break up the sediment. They then have to backwash the sediment out of the tanks.
- 7-20 Q [Is the City starting the process of modifying the Roughing Filters?](#)
- A Answer: The City is moving forward with purchasing the materials to begin the modification to the roughing filters which may or may not help the issue. We are exploring all options. This is one option that can be addressed now.
- 7-20 Q [Are the reservoirs low?](#)
- A Yes but that is not the most critical cause of the water issue. Most critical is that the water from the reservoirs cannot be put through the treatment/filtration process as fast as the community is using it.
- 7-20 Q [It's calling for rain, will that resolve the problem?](#)
- A No. We do need rain, but it does not resolve this crisis. It will only to bring up water levels in the reservoirs from which the plant gets its water, but it does not help the plant produce treated/potable water any faster, in fact if anything it could slow the treatment process further because significant rain after a long dry period washes more material into the water that has to be filtered out.
- 7-20 Q [Why can't the treatment plant produce water fast enough if it has been able to in the past?](#)
- A When the plant was built it was believed to be the right type of plant for our water, but it isn't. The system would work for ground water (whereas ours is surface water), because groundwater has much less organic material to filter out. The filters themselves build up with this material in a way they were not designed or supposed to do, which slows the production of treated water.
- 7-20 Q [What is the City doing about this?](#)
- A **LONG TERM:** We have to build a new treatment plant that works well with the type of water we collect. This cannot be done immediately even if the Water Fund had the money to build it, which it does not. This is a major undertaking that will cost an estimated \$5 million and can be accomplished in maybe 3 years under the best case scenario.
- NEAR TERM (next 1-4 years):** Make infrastructure modifications to the water treatment plant that assist the plant in producing and retaining more water over the next 1-3 summers until a new water treatment plant can be built. There are several ideas and options that are actively being explored and pursued by Borough staff and management.

IMMEDIATE TERM: Reduce consumption. This the only way to get through this crisis in the immediate term (July and August 2016).

7-20 Q [Who is using all the water?](#)

A **The same people and businesses who always use it – residents and businesses. The two seafood processors use a little more than half of the town’s water during the summer and everyone else uses the rest. The seafood processors have already reduced their water use significantly, and one has been diverting some of its fish to another community and has temporarily shut down a significant amount of its operations.**

7-20 Q [Has consumption been higher than usual?](#)

A **Not really. Consumption is always a lot higher in the summer, but is not significantly higher than previous summers – the problem is the water treatment plant’s declining ability to treat and filter water at the rates it has been able to in the past or at the rates the community is currently using it.**

7-20 Q [Did we have a problem with the water that was held in the storage tanks and have to dump it due to high contaminant levels reported in the paper, thus forcing us to start from scratch?](#)

A **No.**

7-20 Q [Does this have anything to do with the recent water quality report?](#)

A **No.**

7-20 Q [Are we needing to treat the water longer to meet contaminant requirements?](#)

A **It is taking the system longer to produce treated water, so yes, to meet DEC water quality requirements, the treatment of water is taking longer.**

7-20 Q [Could there be leaks in the water lines?](#)

A **It is unlikely there are any major breaks/leaks as those would be more easily detectable, but smaller leaks in the mains/lines are possible and Borough staff are doing everything possible to identify if and where there could be any. We ask that anyone who notices any signs of water loss from the system, whether on their property or anyone else’s, notify Borough staff immediately.**

7-20 Q [Is the pool open? Is the water on at the Harbors?](#)

A **At the time of this writing, yes to both, but that could change at any given moment depending on how critically low the treated water levels become.**

7-20 Q [Can we just bypass the water treatment plant and pump untreated water to the community and ask them to boil what potable water they need?](#)

A **Doing this violates State and Federal water regulations. We have asked DEC about the hypothetical *possibility* of a temporary waiver of water quality requirements and the response was no. So while technically possible, the amount of inspection, work, time and financial resources that would then be required to return to 100% treated water, among other difficulties and obstacles, makes doing this not practical or advised unless as an absolute last resort.**

