

Portland Public Water District press conference statement by Floy Jones: July 17, 2013

For 12 years Friends of the Reservoir volunteers have worked diligently in an effort to protect Portland's Bull Run water, to avoid unnecessary treatment plants and buried tanks, to avoid wasteful spending by the Portland Water Bureau. We've engaged in every way possible on a long list of Water Bureau issues, year after year. We've worked through the budget process, written numerous letters, testified many, many times at City Council, we've requested, pleaded, demanded that the public play a significant role in determine the future of our water and in determining Water Bureau spending.

City Council has repeatedly failed the community. They have allowed the Water Bureau to spend at will and there is no expense the Portland Water Bureau does not like.

We've sought transparency and we were met only with roadblocks. We have had to rely primarily on public records requests to unveil Water Bureau activities and to shed light on their many controversial projects and cozy consultant relationships.

Portland can protect our Bull Run water system, we can retain our well-functioning and recently upgraded open reservoirs, we can make water and sewer rates more affordable for individuals, families and businesses.

While Nick Fish wants us to blame the EPA for reservoir projects, the facts are that the Portland Water Bureau is the only utility in the entire nation that played a significant role in crafting the flawed EPA rule, and it is the Portland Water Bureau, not the EPA that chose to unnecessarily fast-track reservoir burial projects doing so in defiance of community interests and in defiance of a 2004 Council ordinance.

Rochester and NYC have shown us that where there is a will there is a way to protect our water system, but there is no will at City Hall.

Mayor Hales refused to sign Steve Novick's letter to the Oregon Health Authority requesting a deferral of reservoir projects. Mayor Hales failed to advocate for his constituents. Charlie Hales won't go down as the Mayor who destroyed our historic reservoirs but he will be known as the Mayor who could have saved them and didn't.

There are many concerns in the community about the future of Portland's drinking water.

The establishment of an independent Portland Public Water District will memorialize in the City charter Bull Run watershed protections. The PPWD prohibits the regionalization or transfer of management of our Bull Run water system to outside jurisdiction. The Portland Public Water District prohibits the privatization of our Bull Run water.

We see no other choice but to establish an independent Portland Public Utility District to protect our drinking water and create a transparent and accountable utility that is responsive to ratepayer interests.

Press Conference video: <https://vimeo.com/70756216>