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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## LAKE DRAWN WATER PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

For Residents Who Draw Their Drinking Water Directly From Lake Whatcom

**From:** Justin Clary, General Manager

**To:** Bellingham Herald News Room  
Sudden Valley Views Editor  
KGMI  
Sudden Valley Community Association  
Cascadia Weekly  
Bellingham Alive!

**CC:** Whatcom County  
City of Bellingham  
Whatcom County Water District 7  
Washington Assn of Sewer & Water Districts  
Birch Bay Water & Sewer District  
South Whatcom Fire Authority  
Sudden Valley Executive Team

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## LAKE DRAWN WATER PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

### For Residents Who Draw Their Drinking Water Directly From Lake Whatcom

Bellingham, Washington (July 20, 2023) – A wastewater system spill has created a potential health risk to residents who withdraw their drinking water directly from Lake Whatcom, especially those households without a disinfection treatment system. As a result, the Whatcom County Health Department and Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District strongly recommend that residents who draw their drinking water directly from Lake Whatcom bring their water to a rolling boil for at least one minute before consuming. For those households with a disinfection treatment system, it is recommended that the treatment system be inspected to ensure it is working properly.

Drinking water customers of Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District or the City of Bellingham do NOT need to boil their water.

On Thursday, July 20, 2023, at approximately 7:45 a.m. the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District received a report of an overflowing manhole located on Lake Louise Road. District staff mobilized to the site and confirmed that the manhole is associated with the District's sanitary sewage conveyance system. The manhole houses an air relief valve associated with the 14-inch diameter, high density polyethylene (HDPE) Lake Louise Road sewer forcemain. The manhole is located approximately 2,250 feet northwest of the District's Beaver Sewer Lift Station. Overflows occurred solely when the Beaver Sewer Lift Station actively pumped wastewater. District staff began contacting on-call tanker truck and traffic control services to assist, as well as began setting up temporary piping to divert flows away from the Lake Louise Road sewer forcemain to the District's Lake Whatcom Boulevard sewer forcemain. Flow diversion was implemented at approximately 8:40 a.m., allowing for pumping from the Beaver Sewer Lift Station—as well as all sewage overflow—to cease. Repairs are ongoing as of the issuance of this release.

Inspection of the overflow confirmed that untreated wastewater reached ditches on both sides of Lake Louise Road, which flow to a drainage located approximately 150-feet southeast of the manhole that flows to Beaver Creek (a tributary of Lake Whatcom). Estimated volume of the wastewater release is unknown at this time (estimates will be developed once staff have time to review sewage control system data documenting sewer lift station operation).

All surface waters can contain disease-causing viruses and bacteria at any time. Accordingly, the District and the Whatcom County Health Department also strongly recommend that anyone withdrawing water from Lake Whatcom through a private system treat their water *at all times*. Minimum treatment should include disinfection to kill bacteria and viruses. For information about drinking water for homes who

withdraw directly from the lake, contact Patrick Hull at Whatcom County Health Department at 360.778.6000.

The Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District encourages customers with questions to call 360.734.9224.

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**About Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District**

Originally formed in 1968 as Water District No. 10, the Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District provides water service to approximately 4,000 customers and sewer service to approximately 4,400 customers in an 18-square mile area encompassing Lake Whatcom. The District is operated by 18 full-time professionals, governed by a five-member board of commissioners elected from within the District, and has an annual budget of approximately \$8 million. District Board and staff are committed to providing the best possible water and sewer services to its customers at an affordable cost, and in a way that contributes to protecting Lake Whatcom’s water quality.