

Watershed projects keep your water clean and safe

Five years ago, the Holiday Farm Fire devastated 25 miles of the McKenzie River. The damage deeply affected local communities, and threatened the sole source of drinking water for 200,000 people in Eugene by stripping forests of tree cover, altering soils, and sending ash, debris, and other pollutants downstream.

As soon as it was safe to enter the fire-impacted area, EWEB decided that we would take early action to protect water quality. Building on long-standing relationships in the McKenzie Valley, we partnered with watershed experts and willing landowners to install erosion control measures, keeping hazardous materials out of the waterways.

In the years since, EWEB and our partners have **planted nearly one million native trees and shrubs** to stabilize soils and filter runoff before it reaches streams. Over time, these trees improve water quality by lowering turbidity and absorbing excess nutrients and other pollutants, reducing drinking water treatment costs. Replanting also restores habitat for fish and wildlife and strengthens the watershed's resilience.

FROM FIRE TO RECOVERY

These efforts are paying off. Year-round monitoring by EWEB's Drinking Water Source Protection team shows that water quality in the McKenzie River has remained excellent each year since the fire. At our Hayden Bridge Water Treatment Plant, state of the art equipment and skilled technicians continue to adapt effectively to post-fire challenges, ensuring safe, reliable drinking water for Eugene homes and businesses.

Meanwhile, upriver riparian forests are re-growing along creeks throughout the burn zone – providing shade and protecting the river from contaminants and erosion. The regeneration shows the watershed's resilience and the community's shared commitment to protecting it.



At Quartz Creek, EWEB and partners reconnected 1.8 miles of the creek to its natural floodplain, improving water quality while also creating natural firebreaks.



"These projects make our watershed more resilient because when we slow down the water flow, sediment and contaminants drop out, making the water cleaner. A slower moving river with less sediment in the water is better for our communities, infrastructure, roads, power lines – everything down river."
—EWEB Water Resources Supervisor
Susan Fricke



More than 200 McKenzie Valley landowners signed watershed stewardship agreements to restore riparian habitats after the 2020 fires.

A COMMUNITY EFFORT

EWEB is able to take a strong leadership role in these efforts thanks in part to the Watershed Recovery Fee collected from our water customers. Guided by our community's priority to maintain high-quality drinking water, these funds have been used strategically and leveraged with grants and partner support to turn local contributions into lasting improvements that protect the watershed we all depend on.



"It's very wonderful to see things come back. There's a whole line of pines about waist-high to shoulder-high on me."
—Sue McAlister, fourth-generation Blue River resident



"We are just so thankful up and down the river for the support we've had. It's good to know there are people out there doing the right thing."
—Jim Russell of Whitewater Ranch

INVESTING TODAY FOR A RESILIENT TOMORROW

As we look ahead, the risks to drinking water continue to grow. Our drinking water supply is susceptible to threats related to development, forestry practices, climate change, and more. EWEB's focus is on managing these challenges responsibly—safeguarding our watersheds and investing in infrastructure to meet our community's needs while keeping rates as affordable as possible.

The BPA Rate Change and Your EWEB Bill

As your community-owned, not-for-profit utility, EWEB is committed to transparency about the factors that influence your rates.

One of the most significant factors is the cost of wholesale electricity. Most of Eugene's electricity comes from low-cost, carbon-free hydroelectric power, primarily from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). Nearly 40¢ of every dollar collected from electric customers goes to BPA.

Last year, we announced a two-part electricity rate adjustment for 2025:

- February 2025 - An EWEB increase to support operational needs and capital investments.
- October 2025 - A separate BPA adjustment, originally projected at 4%, to reflect BPA's updated rates.

BPA's finalized rate increase is smaller than projected for most customer classes.

Effective October 2025, the following BPA rate adjustments will be applied to the Energy Charge portion of your bill:

- Small General Service: 2.5%
- Medium General Service: 3.5%
- Large General Service: 4.1%

We will review a separate EWEB rate change for 2026 during our regular annual budget process.

Find out more at eweb.org/RateInfo.