

FACT SHEET:

RENEWAL & EXPANSION OF THE SPOKANE VALLEY RATHDRUM PRAIRIE AQUIFER PROTECTION AREA (APA) AND ASSOCIATED FEES

Summary

In the upcoming August Primary Election, voters will decide whether to renew and expand the Aquifer Protection Area (APA) and authorize the imposition of fees, supporting aquifer protection and regional water quality efforts. The Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer (SVRP) is the region's primary source of clean and safe drinking water, and continuing this program helps to ensure a sustainable water supply for the future.

Background

The SVRP Aquifer provides drinking water to most residents in the greater Spokane area. It was designated a "Sole Source Aquifer" under the federal Safe Drinking Water Act in the late 1970s due to concerns over contamination.

In 1985, Spokane County and local jurisdictions established the APA, funded by voter-approved fees, to support aquifer protection activities. Renewed in 2004 with adjusted boundaries, the APA currently funds necessary programs focused on safeguarding regional water quality.

Why Renew the Measure?

The current APA and associated fees expire in December 31, 2025.

The August 5, 2025, ballot measure seeks to renew and expand the APA to include all four cities (City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Liberty Lake) overlaying the SVRP Aquifer and portions of unincorporated Spokane County, for another 20 years of funding.

If not renewed, Spokane County and local jurisdictions would look to find alternative funding sources, potentially leading to reduced services or cuts to other essential programs.

Fee Structure

The proposed APA would continue the existing fee structure, which has remained unchanged since 1985:

- **\$1.25 per month per equivalent residential unit for withdrawal of water**
- **\$1.25 per month per equivalent residential unit for onsite sewage disposal (e.g., septic systems)**

A residential parcel with a single-family home pays \$15 in urban areas and \$30 in rural areas, annually.

Multifamily, commercial, and industrial parcels pay based on water meter size. Parcels connected to sewer do not pay the onsite wastewater disposal fee, and undeveloped parcels are not charged.

How Are Funds Used?

Funds collected support Spokane County's Water Resources Program and local jurisdictions aquifer protection activities, including:

- Aquifer Monitoring at 51 sites for early detection of contamination
- Data Management & Analysis to track water quality trends
- Public Education through the Water Resource Center and Doris Morrison Learning Center
- Regional planning and infrastructure improvements for drinking water, stormwater, and sanitary sewer
- Addressing Emerging & Current Threats such as PFAS or other toxic contamination, water availability, and development pressures

APA funds cover administrative costs and Water Resources Program staffing (4 FTEs), with the remaining revenue allocated proportionally to participating cities and Spokane County.

State Law Authorizes APAs

Under RCW 36.36, counties can establish Aquifer Protection Areas to protect drinking water sources. State law requires majority voter approval and city consent for inclusion within the boundary. Funds must be used for eligible activities, such as planning, monitoring, education, and water infrastructure improvements.

For more details, visit Spokane County's Water Resources Program and Aquifer Protection Area websites:

- [Aquifer Protection Area | Spokane County, WA](#)
- [Water Resources | Spokane County, WA](#)