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JBLM water report has no big surprises

Base did have slight increase in water use

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Published: 06:00PM July 17th, 2014

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD -- With the weather warming up, it's nice to know the water in bottles, glasses and cups around Joint Base Lewis-McChord is safe to drink.

The 3.5 million gallons of drinking water used daily on JBLM met state and federal safety standards, according to the 2013 Consumer Confidence Report released this month.

Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Chief, Martin Burris, said there haven't been any huge changes in last year's drinking water results. A grand total of 1,300 tests were done across JBLM throughout 2013 — all coming back similar to years prior.

The biggest surprise was an increase in water usage in 2013. JBLM is part of the Army's Net Zero goal, meaning by 2020, every drop of water on base should be cleaned and reused instead of going into the Puget Sound. To meet this target, the installation should be reducing water usage by 4 percent each year, Burris said.

"We aren't quite there yet," he said. "In 2013, we used a little more than the year before. We kinda went in the wrong direction there. It will just take time."

Drinking water is never completely clean, but state and federal standards set parameters for when it's safe to drink. Some contaminants are safe in regulated levels, according to the reports.

Naturally occurring substances such as arsenic and copper from soil, chlorine and fluoride, have health benefits in small amounts.

"The Department of Health is our regulator so they instruct us on the tests," Burris said. "They have it pretty standard across the board so we meet state and federal regulations."

All of the water on base comes from 22 different groundwater sources. For JBLM, this is mainly Sequelitchew Springs between Lewis North and Lewis Main, and McChord Field uses production wells pulling from the Vashon and Salmon Spring aquifers.

The others are turned on during times of high usage, such as hot summers.

This was the second year on-base residents received cards listing where the report could be found online rather than bulk mailing physical copies. Print cost savings allowed the document to provide even more information, instead of the small four page fold-ups of the past, Burris said.

The two 10-page documents, one for Lewis and the other for McChord Field, provide detailed information on what is in the water by providing more context, information on water programs on base and plenty of water facts throughout. For those who want a physical copy, call 253-967-2837.

To read the reports, visit www.lewis-mcchord.army.mil/publicworks/sites/envir/waterReport.aspx

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