

Belsby lands water-quality project at Hunters, Wash.

Hunters Water District hires help to reduce arsenic levels in water

By David Cole
OF THE JOURNAL OF BUSINESS

Belsby Engineering LLC, of Spokane, has been contracted to find an alternative source of drinking water for the Hunters Water District in Stevens County—which has two wells, but arsenic levels in them exceed state and federal drinking water standards.

If a better source of water can't be found, Belsby would design a water-treatment system that would reduce arsenic levels in the water from the district's wells, says Brian Belsby, principal at the company. The latter option, however, isn't as good, because the associated long-term operation and maintenance costs of a treatment plant would be difficult for the small water district to absorb.

The water district provides water to the community in the Hunters area, which is located east of Lake Roosevelt along state Route 25, northwest of Spokane. The district serves about 310 people and the Columbia (Stevens) School District, Belsby says.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's limit on arsenic is 10 parts per billion or below, but the water district's supply of water has been testing at about 16 to 20 parts per billion, he says. The Washington state Department of Health has adopted the EPA standard, he says.

If Belsby Engineering can find a new source of water that has enough flow, that well will become the sole source for

residents in the water district. If the new source can't produce enough water, but has a low enough level of arsenic, it could be blended with water from the older sources to supply the community if the blend results in an overall arsenic level that meets EPA and state Department of

Health standards, he says.

Belsby's contract with the water district calls for it to drill test wells, test the water quality, and evaluate what would be the district's best alternative. Belsby also will design the final system, whatever alternative is chosen.

The project will be paid for with federal stimulus funding. The district received \$1.1 million in stimulus money, and it was intended to pay for a new production well, pump station, and transmission main to address the water district's needs. Belsby says the funds also could pay for a water-treatment plant, if that alternative is chosen.

Belsby declines to say what his firm's contract amount is for the project, but says the project will provide his firm with

a significant amount of work.

"It's gratifying to work on a project with such great need," says Belsby. "It's nice to see that a federal stimulus program is helping a small community in Washington."

Belsby started its work in May, he says. Any construction would have to begin by February, he says.

Belsby has identified a promising well on U.S. National Park Service property in the area, and is awaiting approval from the Park Service to drill on that site and begin testing there, he says. The Park Service is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

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