



# News Release

For immediate release: April 30, 2013

(13-057)

Contacts: [Carolyn Cox](#), Communications Office  
[Kelly Stowe](#), Communications Office

360-236-3162

360-236-4022

## State honors providers' outstanding work for safe and reliable drinking water

**OLYMPIA** — We all appreciate a great tasting glass of safe drinking water yet may not think about who keeps it that way. When you turn on your tap next week, take a moment to thank the water system operator who ensures your water is safe and there when you need it.

During National Drinking Water Week May 5-11, the Department of Health is presenting awards to two outstanding water system operators and one system that has dramatically improved thanks to efforts of a highly-skilled operator and staff.

“Washington has some of the safest, best-tasting tap water in the world, and the credit for that achievement largely belongs with our outstanding water system operators,” said Denise Clifford, director of the state Office of Drinking Water.

Tapped as award winners are:

- **Belfair Water District #1** — hired a new manager/operator, Thomas Peadon, who restored the community's faith in its drinking water after a crisis of leadership and years of neglect.
- **Dave Olson** — area management consultant and certified operator who has worked tirelessly with water systems and community leaders to resolve nitrate pollution in Whatcom County.
- **Gary Sale** — certified water treatment plant operator who ensures safe, reliable drinking water for state parks and residential water systems on San Juan Island despite challenges like budget cutbacks.

“It's always a tough job picking our award winners,” said Clifford, “because there are so many great people dedicated to protecting the quality of drinking water in our state.”

About 6,000 certified water system operators in Washington spend their days ensuring that more than five million people have safe, reliable drinking water.

Operating a water system is a demanding round-the-clock job that involves planning and engineering, construction and maintenance, monitoring water quality, managing a budget, and customer service. Protecting our drinking water from the potential effects of droughts, floods, main breaks, vandalism, pollution, and a host of other threats is important work considering how many people rely on it.

Washington's 2013 awards:

**Belfair Water District #1, Mason County – “Most Improved”**

This award recognizes Belfair Water District #1's transformation from a water system in chaos into a well-managed operation. Thomas Peadon, the system's new manager and operator, is largely credited for the system's recent success. The North Mason County water system faced failing equipment, a crisis of leadership, and financial and legal woes. The award credits Peadon and the utility district's board of commissioners with confronting those challenges and restoring public confidence in the water system. *The Department of Health will present the award at 6 p.m. on May 8 at 22451 N.E. State Route 3, Belfair.*

**Dave Olson, Whatcom County – “Going Above and Beyond”**

Dave Olson, a management consultant and certified operator, is receiving the “Going Above and Beyond” award for his efforts to address nitrate contamination in Whatcom County. He initially volunteered his expertise to help the Department of Health find alternative sources of water for four threatened water systems that together serve more than 700 people. In the process, he developed a deep understanding of the issues facing each system. Olson has conducted numerous studies on alternative water sources. *The Department of Health will present the award at 10:30 a.m. on May 6 at 300 4<sup>th</sup> St., Lynden.*

**Gary Sale, San Juan County – “Operator of the Year”**

Gary Sale will receive the “Operator of the Year” award for excellent management of multiple water systems in the San Juan Islands. He manages state park water systems in San Juan County, provides support for five additional systems in the islands, and is a contract operator for more water systems. As a Washington State Parks employee, he's kept water systems safe and reliable despite budget and staff cuts. He has come up with strategies that help others do their jobs better. For example, he created written standard operating procedures for seven state park water systems that help park staff operate the systems safely and consistently. *The Department of Health will present the award at 4:30 p.m. on May 15 at 884 Deer Harbor Road, Eastsound.*

The [Department of Health website](http://doh.wa.gov) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*.

Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).