

Water and Fire

What are the Tribe's plans for water—and what would establish fire readiness?

Christopher Knorr · Independent community briefing · Edited October 16, 2026

What this publication is—and is not. A public-document briefing with bounded conclusions and unanswered questions; not a technical water or fire-safety inspection, Tribal statement, or confirmation of current facility readiness. Checked primary records Oct 16, 2026 · other sources dated in the notes. Source-status notes matter.

The question

What water plans are on the record, and what is known about water for firefighting? There is an important difference between those two questions. The Pit River Tribe operates community drinking-water systems at XL Reservation and Montgomery Creek Rancheria. The Tribe says those systems also provide water to aid fire prevention. That description does **not** establish how much water can be delivered for firefighting, for how long, or under what emergency conditions. [W1]

There is also more planning material in the public record than earlier drafts of this briefing recognized. The **Strategic Plan 2020**, publicly posted as a **draft**, contains a specific Public Water Systems / Water Department section (printed pages 102–109). It sets out goals for equipment, rates, conservation, funding, staffing, and possible system expansion. The same draft has land-use and area-master-plan targets. The unanswered question is **which portions were adopted, updated, funded, or completed**, and whether a current, system-specific fire-water or emergency operating plan exists. [W2]

This independent briefing does not judge the adequacy of an actual water system. It identifies published plans, the unanswered technical questions, and the offices from which an answer could come.

Why water and fire must be examined together

A household water system can deliver drinking water while lacking the storage, pressure, connections, or operational arrangements for a large structure fire. **Fire flow** means the volume of water that can be supplied at the needed rate and duration. Establishing it requires engineering and response records, not a statement that a system aids fire prevention.

Five practical connections matter: **source** (wells or other supply), **storage** (usable water reserves), **power** (electricity or backup for pumps where required), **delivery** (pipes, hydrants, and tanker fill points), and **access** (the ability of responding crews to reach the water and buildings). These are questions to ask, **not findings of deficiencies** at XL or Montgomery Creek.

Places without a Tribe-operated community drinking-water network may use other arrangements for household and emergency water. Which sources and arrangements actually serve any given location must be verified locally; the existence of two community systems does not establish the capacities of every other place.

What the public record establishes

- 1. **The systems and their stated function.** The Tribe identifies XL and Montgomery Creek as its two community public water systems, says both supply drinking water and water to aid fire prevention, and identifies Chimney Rock Truck Stop as a third, differently classified, transient non-community system. It also describes ongoing operation-and-maintenance updates. [W1]
- 2. **A substantial draft Water Department plan exists.** Pages 102–109 of the 2020 strategic-plan draft set out needs and objectives for equipment, water billing and rate changes, conservation and leak detection, grants, coordination with IHS, system expansion, and operator development. These are **historical proposals and targets** , not proof of current implementation. [W2]
- 3. **Specific planning milestones were proposed.** Other sections of the draft called for a land-use plan in 2022 and area master plans for XL, Montgomery Creek, Lookout, Roaring Creek, Big Bend, and Windy Point. The Tribe’s February 2026 newsletter confirms appointment of five Land Use Working Group members, with a series of meetings planned. A draft target and a working group do not establish that a final land-use plan was adopted. [W2; W3]
- 4. **Operator succession is a published concern.** The Tribe’s Water Department page states that most of its certified operators are nearing retirement. That is a statement about anticipated workforce needs—not proof of an understaffed system. [W1]
- 5. **Federal and local authorities have distinct roles.** EPA regulates public drinking-water quality in Indian country under applicable law; IHS can support eligible sanitation-facility projects. Local firefighting dispatch, response, and fire-water requirements are separate matters. Federal drinking-water compliance alone does not demonstrate firefighting capacity. [W4; W5]
- 6. **Recent community projects have differing statuses.** The Tribe’s August 2026 newsletter invited members to a September 1 Emergency Operations Center ribbon cutting and identified greenhouse and community-resilience-center projects as unfunded proposals. Announcements, grant applications, awards, openings, and completed operations are different stages. A publicly announced ribbon cutting is not, by itself, proof that the center is now operating. [W7]

What the 2020 Water Department plan actually says

The following is a **historical reading of the draft** , not a current performance scorecard. The relevant sections had not been read in the previous v0.2 edition; they are included here because their omission distorted the picture of existing planning. [W2]

Subject	In the posted 2020 draft	Question that remains in 2026
Repair equipment	The Water Department reported limited access to heavy equipment for repairs and proposed obtaining equipment.	What equipment and repair capacity are available now?
Rates and operating resources	It discussed water bills, rate burdens, collections, Tribal funding, and options for more sustainable income.	What fee schedule and operating budget currently govern each system?
Conservation	It proposed water audits, leak checking, and conservation practices.	Were audits completed, what was found, and what work followed?

Subject	In the posted 2020 draft	Question that remains in 2026
Training and staffing	It described operator development and a target for trained/certified coverage as the systems expanded.	How many certified operators and trainees currently cover each system?
Expansion	It contemplated water service in future housing areas and coordination among Water, Housing, Lands, and IHS.	Which expansions were authorized, funded, or built?
Wastewater	It proposed exploring treatment plants at XL and Montgomery Creek.	Was any wastewater project funded, constructed, or replaced by another approach?

The central finding changes: it is inaccurate to suggest that the public record contains no water planning. It does contain historical departmental planning. What is **not established** is a current adopted plan covering fire flow and emergency continuity, or the status of the draft's proposed work. [W2]

What remains unestablished

Question	Why it matters	Who can provide the authoritative answer
Is there a current adopted water-system plan, and what does it cover?	Connects old targets with today's responsibilities and budget.	Tribal Council / administration; Water Department
What fire flow is available at XL and Montgomery Creek?	Tests pressure, sustained rate, storage, hydrants and tanker fill points.	Water Department; responding fire authority
Which pumps depend on electricity and have backup power?	A shutoff may affect replenishment or pressure, depending on the system's design.	Water Department; Office of Emergency Services
Who answers structure fires at specific rancherias?	Identifies dispatch, mutual aid, water transport, and response agreements.	Office of Emergency Services; relevant local fire agencies
Is there a FEMA-approved Tribal mitigation plan?	Establishes the actual federal mitigation planning and grant posture.	Office of Emergency Services; FEMA
Which 2020 water and 2022 land-planning targets were completed or superseded?	Distinguishes work done from plans still only on paper.	Water Department; Lands; Tribal Council

The answer to each question could be that a plan or arrangement already exists. **An item missing from the sources reviewed is an evidence gap, not a finding of institutional failure.**

How we got here

When	Record and its limits
2020; posted 2021	Strategic Plan 2020 drafted goals for water operations, staffing, rates, conservation and area planning; adoption status was not established in this review. [W2]
2022 targets	The draft called for a final land-use plan and area master plans; their current disposition requires confirmation. [W2]
2025–2026	Tribal newsletters describe land-use, emergency, and resilience-related activity at different proposal and construction stages. [W7]

When	Record and its limits
October 16, 2026	This briefing re-read the Water Department section and updated the public question from “is there a plan?” to “what is the status and practical coverage of the plans?”

Who has authority—and what each role does not prove

Body	Publicly described role	Still must be established
Tribal Council and authorized departments	Decide or administer policy, programs, expenditures and project priorities within applicable Tribal authorities.	Whether any particular water or mitigation plan was adopted or amended.
Water Department	Operates the named public drinking-water systems; directs system operation and maintenance.	Fire-flow certification, backup arrangements, staffing and current project status.
Office of Emergency Services	Coordinates emergency preparedness and relevant response planning.	Each location's dispatch and mutual-aid arrangements.
Fire/dispatch agencies	Determine actual jurisdiction, response resources, and agreements in particular areas.	That a general county responsibility establishes every response agreement on Tribal land.
EPA / IHS	Public-water regulation and eligible sanitation-infrastructure assistance, respectively.	That drinking-water compliance certifies structure-fire flow or that every desired project is funded.

What to watch and what to ask

The Tribe’s **August 2026 newsletter** states that the **October 17, 2026 membership meeting begins at 10:00 a.m. at the VFW Hall in Burney** , and says a **Zoom link will be posted on social media** before the meeting. That is a published advance notice; it is not verification that the Zoom link has been posted or that no arrangements have changed. **Confirm attendance and current access details through the Tribe’s own channels.** [W7]

Questions to bring to an authorized meeting or send to the appropriate office:

1. **What written water and emergency-operation plans are currently in effect for XL and Montgomery Creek, and when were they adopted?**
2. **What has been completed from the 2020 Water Department goals—equipment, conservation, rates, training, expansion, and wastewater?**
3. **Has a qualified review established fire flow, usable reserves, and truck-fill access for each location? Can a non-sensitive public summary be shared?**
4. **Which pumps have tested backup power, and how long is it intended to support operations?**
5. **Which fire agencies respond to structures at each rancheria, and are written agreements or dispatch procedures in place?**
6. **Who is responsible for the next public update, on what date, and through what publication or contact route?**

For a useful answer, ask for **the responsible office, the present status, the next milestone, and the budget or resource source when appropriate** . A reasonable request need not expose security-sensitive infrastructure diagrams, personal personnel records, or protected information.

The source record and its limits

The strongest local documents are the Tribe's **Water Department page** and **Strategic Plan 2020 (draft)** , both inspected on October 16. The available government records answer some legal or historical questions, but none supplies confirmed fire-flow figures for individual Pit River systems. The original member post underlying an earlier draft was not independently reviewed; this edition is therefore **an independent public-document question briefing, not an account or quotation of that post** .

Source	What it establishes	Evidence limit
[W1] Pit River Tribe — Water Department	The three named water systems, stated purposes, operation, and operator-retirement concern.	Undated web statement; no design/response test data.
[W2] Pit River Tribe — Strategic Plan 2020, draft	Water Department pages 102–109 (printed); separate land-use/area goals.	Draft targets do not show adoption or completion.
[W3] Pit River Tribe — Q1 2026 newsletter (PDF)	Confirms January 2026 Land Use Working Group appointments and planned planning sessions.	Does not establish an adopted final land-use plan.
[W4] EPA — Tribal drinking-water requirements and operator certification	Operator oversight and certification framework.	Not a fire-flow determination for any local system.
[W5] IHS — Sanitation Facilities Construction Criteria (2003)	Historical project criteria relevant to sanitation and fire-protection design.	Check current project-specific agreement and applicable policy before applying.
[W6] Pit River Tribe — Q4 2025 newsletter (PDF)	Earlier published 2026 membership-meeting dates and venue.	Superseded on attendance details by the August 2026 notice; always check latest.
[W7] Pit River Tribe — Q3 August 2026 newsletter (PDF)	October 17 meeting at 10 a.m., VFW Burney and proposed Zoom announcement; EOC ribbon-cutting invitation; resilience-center and greenhouse proposals explicitly not funded.	Meeting access can change, an invitation does not establish completed operations, and proposals are not awards.

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