

The Portland City Council has referred two City Charter amendments to the November 2019 ballot:

Proposed Bull Run Watershed limitations; and Proposed mutual aid agreements



If passed, what would these amendments do?

1 Bull Run Watershed Limits. If passed, the first proposed amendment would add environmental and land-use limitations for the Bull Run Watershed – Portland’s primary drinking water source – to the City Charter. The proposed limitations currently exist in City Code, but those limitations can be amended or removed by City Council. The current Charter does not reference the Bull Run Watershed. Because the City Charter can only be amended by Portland voters in an election, the proposed amendment would provide long-term conservation of the Watershed unless Portland voters decide to change the limitations in the future.

The current provisions in City Code proposed to be added to the City Charter would:

- prohibit the public from entering the watershed, with specified exceptions;
- prohibit tree cutting for any purpose not related to the City’s drinking water or hydroelectric systems; and
- prohibit transferring City-owned lands or infrastructure to private business or organizations.



If the amendment is not passed, the environmental and land-use limitations for the Bull Run Watershed would continue to exist exclusively in City Code and would be subject to amendment by the City Council.

2 Mutual Aid Agreements. If passed, the second proposed amendment would allow City Council to approve and fund agreements between the Water Bureau and other cities, communities, and tribes to provide and receive prompt support during times of emergency like an earthquake. Because emergencies are rare, the cost of mutual aid agreements varies. If the amendment is not passed, City Council may not be able to provide and receive prompt support from non-local jurisdictions and City Council would pay for any costs associated with mutual aid agreements with local jurisdictions from the General Fund instead of the Water Fund.

If you’d like to learn more or have questions, contact Commissioner Fritz at amanda@portlandoregon.gov.