

Splash

Metro Water
Newsletter
Fall 2014

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Fee Adjusted for Water Resources Stability

At the September 29, 2014 hearing, the Metro Water Board of Directors approved having the Water Resources Utilization Fee set at 40¢ per 1,000 gallons. No change was made to any other components of the water bill.

A week earlier, an Information Meeting was held to give customers an opportunity to ask questions about Metro Water and about the Water Resources Utilization Fee.

At both meetings, an overview of the Water Resources Utilization Fee was given. In that presentation, Joseph Olsen, Metro's General Manager, explained that with the Water Resources Utilization Fee, Metro Water can achieve water resources stability in a fiscally responsible manner and within a workable timeframe. The fee is directly allocated to projects that put to use the District's CAP water and recycled water. Revenue is placed in a reserve account that can only be used with Board direction. The fee is not unique to Metro in that our neighbors have similar fees - Tucson Water (75¢ per 1,000 gallons), Oro Valley (95¢ per 1,000 gallons) and Marana (43¢ per 1,000 gallons).

Metro Water has identified three projects to best address its water resources challenges. Those challenges include a two-foot annual groundwater level decline in the Metro-Main service area, deep groundwater levels of over 500 feet at Metro Southwest-Diablo Village service area, and how to most efficiently utilize its CAP water and recycled water.

The first project involves the District delivering a portion of its recycled water to Cortaro-Marana Irrigation District (CMID), a local agricultural irrigation district. This would allow Metro to receive substantially more recycled water credits and reduce groundwater pumping in the region by CMID.

The second project is in Metro-Southwest, where the District would have a portion of its CAP water recharged and recovered from Tucson Water's recharge facilities, conveyed through Tucson Water's system, and delivered to Metro Southwest. This would stabilize or even increase the groundwater levels in the area and leverages a renewable water resource.

The CAP Recharge, Recovery and Delivery System (CAP RRDS) is the largest project aimed at addressing the most pressing water resource challenge facing the District. The CAP RRDS will recover CAP water that has been recharged at the District's Avra Valley Recharge Project near the Marana Airport and then move the water through a 13 mile transmission line to be blended with groundwater at the Herb Johnson Reservoir. The CAP RRDS would reverse the two foot annual groundwater decline and utilize water resources that Metro customers have invested in.

The Board approved a 10-year timeline to accomplish the three major components for the Project – Land Acquisition, Design, and Construction. The timeline ensures that everything can be accomplished efficiently but also with the least financial impact to customers. The Water Resources Utilization Fee would be able to fund the land acquisition and design activities for the CAP RRDS, complete the CMID Recycled Water Project and Wheel CAP water to Metro-Southwest. This avoids adding additional debt to the District and reduces the financial impact of these initiatives.

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Metro Water Helps Launch Innovative Water Management Tool

Metro Water District and City of Tucson have each approved agreements with the City of Phoenix to initiate a pilot project testing a new water management concept. The concept, known as “Self-Firming”, lets water providers from different parts of Arizona prepare collaboratively for possible future shortages of Central Arizona Project (CAP) water.

Specifically, Self-Firming allows the City of Phoenix to store or firm water at Metro’s and Tucson’s recharge facilities in advance of a shortage. In exchange during a shortage year, Phoenix would directly receive an equivalent amount of CAP water from Metro and Tucson. This ensures that each region will have no interruption of water during a shortage.

“Metro Water, Tucson and Phoenix saw a future challenge and then worked jointly to solve the issue by creating a new water management tool,” said Judy Scrivener, Chair of the Metro Board of Directors. “Agreeing to do a pilot phase for Self-Firming is a win-win for the Phoenix and Tucson regions to prepare for shortages on the Colorado River.”

Metro Water, Tucson and Phoenix’s governing bodies approved an agreement to begin the pilot project in 2015. Under the pilot phase, Phoenix will store 150 acre-feet of its CAP allocation next year at Metro’s Avra Valley Recharge Project. Phoenix would then earn the appropriate recharge credits. In 2016, Metro would then recover and use the Phoenix credits that had been stored at the Avra Valley Recharge Project and Phoenix would directly receive from Metro the appropriate CAP water at their treatment plants. This ensures Metro’s CAP water needs remain whole.

(continued on page 3)



Leak Adjustment Policy Streamlined

Metro’s Board of Directors approved a new leak adjustment policy, effective August 14, 2014. The new policy is easier to explain to customers and easier to administer.

Same Tier, Same Month, Last Year

Leak adjustments are now calculated at the current adopted rate based on the same tier, the same month of the previous year. This means customers with high usage still pay for the water, but at a less expensive rate.

Every Three Years

The new policy allows relief on high usage bills once every three years. The previous policy was limited to once per account.

Application Process

Adjustments are offered to customers upon written request after all leaks have been repaired and water usage by the customer has returned to normal levels. Leak adjustments are also available when there is an unexplained high water use, theft, or vandalism. Certain conditions must be met.

To apply for a leak adjustment, call Customer Service at 520-575-8100 or print the application from the Metro Water website.

Visit www.metrowater.com and click on “Printable Forms” under the “Contact/Forms” tab. ■

NEW ENTRANCE & SIGN

Our north office driveway at 6265 N. La Cañada has been relocated due to road improvements and Metro Water will soon have a new, more prominent sign facing La Cañada. Please take note of new traffic signage and use caution around construction activities.



Metro Helps Launch Water Mgmt. Tool

(continued from page 2)

Phoenix will be doing the same pilot project with Tucson Water for 850 acre-feet of CAP water.

“Under the pilot, more wet water will be stored in Southern Arizona,” said Joseph Olsen, Metro’s General Manager. “More importantly, this concept ensures that Metro Water is made whole both financially and with regards to our water resources.”

The Southern Arizona Water Users Association and the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association have publically voiced support and expressed interest in Self-Firming. Furthermore, the Arizona Water Banking Authority, Arizona Department of Water Resources and Central Arizona Project have been supportive of the concept.

“If the pilot is successful, Self-Firming could be adopted by other water providers in both the Phoenix and Tucson areas as well as the Arizona Water Banking Authority,” said Scrivener. Full scale Self-Firming would involve Phoenix area water providers financing the expansion of Tucson area recharge facilities to store an unused portion of CAP water in Southern Arizona to better prepare for future shortages. ■

Fee Adjusted for Water Resources Stability

(continued from page 1)

The adjustment to the Water Resources Utilization Fee will strengthen and better manage our water resources as well as reduce groundwater declines. For the average customer, this is a \$1.60 a month or \$19.20 a year investment.

Questions Raised at Public Hearing & Information Meeting

At the September 29, 2014 public hearing, only one comment from the public was made. Reb Guillot, Chair of Metro’s Finance Oversight Committee, said that the Committee voted unanimously to support the increase to the Water Resources Utilization Fee because using a designated fee was the clearest, best way to protect and use our water resources in the most responsible way. The Finance Oversight Committee is comprised of customers who make recommendations to the Board regarding the District’s finances.

At the September 22, 2014 Information Meeting, some of the residents who attended asked questions. We wanted to share those questions along with the answers.

How does recharging of CAP water affect water quality and is there a loss of water with recharge? Recharging water through the aquifer is a natural treatment process that has been shown to be highly effective. With recharge, Arizona’s water rules do require 5 percent of the water recharged to be left in the aquifer if the stored water is not recovered within a year.

Will the level of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) increase from the recovered CAP water? TDS is the measurement used for the mineral content in water in which the higher the amount, the “harder” the water. CAP water does have a higher concentration of TDS than groundwater though TDS varies even among Metro Water wells. The CAP water will be blended twice – first with the groundwater at the Avra Valley Recharge Project and then again with groundwater at Herb Johnson Reservoir. In April 2014, the Board has set an acceptable TDS range for the blended water that would be delivered to customers.

Has our water become harder in recent years? As water levels in the aquifer decline and the deeper you have to pump for water, TDS levels can increase.

If the construction of the CAP Project will cost \$36 million, would it be better to use Tucson Water’s infrastructure? Metro Water could “wheel” or move its CAP water through Tucson Water’s system similar to how Oro Valley has done for a portion of its CAP water. This scenario does make sense for Metro-Southwest since only a small amount of water would be moved. For Metro-Main, an analysis showed that the distance and volume of water to be moved results in a higher per unit volume cost. Building and owning the infrastructure gives greater security and control to Metro; whereas, a wheeling agreement with Tucson Water would be short-term, requiring renegotiation ever few years. Metro needs to plan to meet customer water resources needs for the next fifty-years and beyond.

What is the average bill in Metro Water? The average bill is \$48.46. This is based on an average monthly consumption of 8,000 gallons.

How does the District’s average bill compare with other water providers? A recent survey of 90% of the water providers in Arizona showed that the District’s average bill is in the mid-range.

Wouldn’t District customers have been better off becoming part of Tucson Water? This October is the 22nd anniversary of the District’s formation and much has happened during those years. Today, the focus is on how to best manage our water resources by accomplishing water resource projects with minimal impact to customers. This year, the District has worked hard to manage its budget through a new priority driven budget process, which has allowed us to not require an increase to the Water Availability Rate or Water Consumption Charges. That is why the District is only looking at increasing the Water Resources Utilization Fee by 20 cents per 1,000 gallons. ■



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PRESORTED STANDARD
US POSTAGE
PAID
TUCSON, AZ
PERMIT # 129

Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday
7:30 - 5:30
Friday 7:30 - Noon

**The Metro Water office
will be closed on:**

Veterans Day ~ Tuesday, November 11

Thanksgiving ~ Thursday & Friday,
November 27 & 28

Christmas Day ~ Thursday, December 25

Board of Directors:

Judy Scrivener, Chair
Dan M. Offret, Vice Chair
Richard Byrd, Member
Jim Doyle, Member
Bryan Foulk, Member

Board Meetings:

Monday, November 10
Monday, December 8
Monday, January 12

*Board meetings are held at
6265 N. La Cañada Drive
and typically start at 6:00 pm.
Board meetings are held the
second Monday of each month.*

**If the second Monday is a
holiday, the meeting is moved
to the following Wednesday.*

Knock, Knock!

Who's there?

Justin.

Justin Who?

Justin case you no longer have a landline, Metro Water District is asking customers to share cell phone numbers and/or email addresses, so we have a way to reach you, if needed. Call 520-575-8100, email your contact information to info@metrowater.com or enclose your information with your payment.

Thank you!

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