

Mutual Members Express Their Concerns About Water Quality

At the July 28, 2007 Board Meeting, Vice President Terry Deveau started the meeting with a report on the State of Mutual. He noted the concerns about the water quality after having two "boil water" notices in a month due to Total Coliform levels found during the required monthly testing of water quality that exceeded state and federal standards. He also announced that the Mutual has taken title to 253 acres above the current water tanks and up to the top of the ridge. This land provides the Mutual with possible horizontal well drill sites. Terry noted that the current horizontal well site water is at a pH of 7 and therefore does not require the addition of caustic soda needed by water from the valley floor aquifer.

For about 1 ½ hours the members in the audience questioned water quality, showed knit shirts that have become discolored when washed with Mutual water, expressed concerns about the 50 year-old redwood tank that has been indicated as the source of the contaminated water, and asked about the high level of carbon tetrachloride noted in the 2006 water quality report all members received. The members requested more frequent testing for volatile organic chemicals.

The Board created four committees and assigned the budget committee to follow up on member concerns such as

replacement of the redwood tank, and budgeting for more frequent water quality testing. The committees are: Personnel and Compensation, Budget, Nominating, and By-laws Revision. Language needs to be added to the By-laws allowing the Board of Directors to vote by email on motions between meetings.

The next Board meeting was set for September 1 before and after the annual meeting. The Board also set a meeting schedule for the first Saturday of every other month for the next year.

Thank You Les Wilson For Your Years of Service as General Manager

The Board voted not to continue the services of Les Wilson as General Manager of the Mutual Water Company. This was to cut costs in order to move more funds into needed capital improvements.

Les Wilson has been General Manager for almost seven years. During his service hundreds of feet of substandard water pipe have been replaced. He has vigorously defended the Mutual's water rights in face of increasing development pressure on an aquifer of fixed capacity. He championed the addition of 253 acres of land above the water tanks which were acquired at a cost of \$1 from Placer County.

At this time there is no new General Manager. The Board is dividing up the tasks among the Directors, the Operation's Manager, and the Office Manager.

Public Service District Adopts Groundwater Management Plan

At their May 29, 2007 meeting, by a unanimous vote, the Squaw Valley Public Service District (SVPSD) Board adopted the Groundwater Management Plan (GMP). The plan calls for the SVPSD to be the Implementation Group with the power to make decisions. All the rest of the entities pumping water in the Olympic Valley aquifer are part of an Advisory Group that makes recommendations to the Implementation Group. At the public hearing, only the Resort at Squaw Creek backed the plan.

The Squaw Valley Mutual Water Company (SVMWC) declined to participate in the GMP as currently written. They supported the idea of a groundwater management plan, but thought that the current plan was lacking in several items. The GMP does not mention that by California Law, the entity implementing the GMP can assess a fee on the groundwater pumpers. Despite the SVPSD stating they have no intention at this time of assessing any fees, and that they do not intend to regulate the pumping of any of the groundwater pumpers, legally, they have the right to do so. The SVMWC has proposed that implementation of the GMP be by a Memorandum of Understanding or a Joint Powers Agreement. As of now, the SVPSD as declined to develop such agreements. Maybe in the future, there will be the opportunity to collaboratively manage the shared water resource (the aquifer).

The SVMWC Board felt that to sign onto a plan where their members could be forced to pay a fee for pumping their

own water and not have the right to vote on the implementation or amount of such a fee was not appropriate. The Board's fiduciary responsibility to the members would not allow such an action.

Members of the SVPSD Board have stated that the GMP is a living document and can be changed. The SVMWC intends to continue the conversations about groundwater management with all the pumpers in the valley.

SVMWC Board Meets

The SVMWC board met on May 27, 2007 to discuss the business of the water company. Finances continue to be an important topic.

Eighty-seven percent of the members have paid their special assessment. The Board voted to pay off the loan on June 1 instead of June 30 as planned, saving \$25.05 in daily interest even though 100% of the assessments have not been collected. The remaining funds will be borrowed from the operations fund and repaid as the rest of the special assessments come in.

General Manager Les Wilson pointed out that the cost of supplies, water quality testing, utilities, and pipe continue to rise. He recommended a 10% increase in dues and charges. The Board thought that they needed to see the five-year financial plan before adopting a fee increase so that they could clearly explain to the members why such an increase was needed.

The Board was sorry to learn that Operations Manager Randy Dresselhaus plans to leave the Mutual at the end of

December and move to Hawaii. The Board is moving forward with finding his replacement so that the new person would overlap with Randy and learn the many details from him that keep the water system running.

Margot Garcia reported on the Groundwater Management Plan. She submitted an extensive critique of the draft to the PSD and received responses to her concerns. She noted that the "final" plan contained a statement about the impact of global climate change on the Olympic Valley aquifer and it is listed as a key issue. If, as predicted, there is less snow and more rain, how will that affect the aquifer refilling each spring season.

Help Wanted Ads

Running the Mutual Water Company is a cooperative affair. We can use lots of help. Here are some specific tasks that need help (and will save us money)

Wanted: A volunteer to help design our web page and make it more user friendly. A lot of the material is already on the web page, but it is hard to access and not easy to find things like Board Minutes.

Wanted: A volunteer willing to make about 20 phone calls to water companies in the Tahoe Basin and interview the managers. A survey has already been developed.

Wanted: A volunteer willing to write articles for the newsletter.

Wanted: a volunteer willing to attend meetings; like PSD Board meetings. The volunteer would be asked to write up a

short report on the meeting and send it to Mutual Board Members.

Wanted: A volunteer to write grant applications for state and other funds for the Mutual.

Aquifer-Well-Stream Interaction Study (AWIS)

The PSD at their January 30, 2007 meeting adopted a resolution that invites the other pumpers in the valley to join in a study to ascertain if there is any interaction between the flows in Squaw Creek and the level of the aquifer as impacted by pumping of different wells. Residents of Squaw Valley have expressed different views on the impact of groundwater pumping on the creek. The PSD's resolution put a limit of \$500,000 on the study and that the cost would be shared proportionally to the amount of water each entity pumps from the aquifer.

The SVMWC has agreed to participate in developing the scope of the study, but reserves the right as to whether to make a financial commitment until the scope of the study is decided. There is no money in the current budget for such a study, so the members would have to decide if and how they wanted to pay to participate.

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Board has said it would like to participate, but not as a voting member, and that it could probably contribute \$100,000 from a settlement with Squaw Valley Ski Corporation. These funds were a fine for a diesel spill at the Red Dog facility and may be used for the mitigation of environmental impacts located in the Truckee River watershed.

Wanted ! Your Email Address

At the recent Board Meeting, many of those present expressed an interest in improving communications between the Board of Directors of the Mutual and the members. An email system could be used to inform members of Boil Water Notices or other important information.

If you want to receive information (e.g. Boil Water Notice, Board Agendas and Minutes) from the Mutual by email please send your email address to:
Svmwcinfo@gmail.com

What is a Mutual Water Company? How is it different from a Public Service District?

When the Poulsens platted the first residential development in Squaw Valley called Squaw Valley Estates, they needed to develop a water delivery system for those houses. In 1961, they decided to form a non-profit private water corporation known as a mutual water company.

The members of the corporation are only those persons holding title to land within Squaw Valley Estates, subdivisions 1, 2, 3 or 4. Members are entitled to one vote for each lot they hold or to a fraction of a vote for each lot jointly owned. Each member has an equity in the assets of the company and should the company be sold or dissolved, shall be entitled to share in the distribution of the assets of the company in proportion to the capital investment which the member made.

At the annual meeting of the Mutual, held on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend the members elect the seven Directors, who serve two year staggered terms and who manage the affairs and business of the corporation. The Directors set the fees for delivery of water to each lot.

The Squaw Valley Public Service District (SVPSD), a governmental entity was organized in 1964 as the Squaw Valley County Water District and changed its name in 1999 to reflect its multiple responsibilities. The SVPSD provides water, sewage, garbage and fire protection services, and has the power to levy fees for the services it provides. Any registered voter in the Squaw Valley District may vote for the five Directors that make up the board. The SVPSD has defined its service area as the entire Squaw Creek watershed.

The Mutual was given water rights by the Poulsens to pump up to 200 gallons a minute from each Well #1 and Well #2. In addition, the Mutual has a horizontal well in the hillside.

SVPSD's original wells and pipes were built by the State of California in order to service the site for the 1960 Winter Olympic Games. They now provide service to 663 residential units and 20 large commercial entities.

The Mutual Water Company is your company. The Board of Directors welcomes input from you, its members on the affairs of the company. We benefit from your suggestions and ideas. You are always welcome at all meetings.

Boil Water Notices

By Anne-Marie Giese

Members of the Squaw Valley Mutual Water Company have received two Boil Water Notices over the last two months. A Boil Water Notice is issued by the Mutual at the request of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) when a concern over the safety of the water is present. Both notices were issued after water samples from the Mutual's system tested positive for Total Coliform bacteria. Coliform bacteria are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other, potentially harmful, bacteria may be present. E. coli bacteria, which can be harmful to humans, were not found in any water samples taken from the Mutual's system. More information about water contaminants and the potential health effects can be obtained by calling the USEPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline (1-800-426-4791) or visiting <http://epa.gov>.

On June 12th Randy Dresselhaus, SVMWC's Maintenance & Operations Manager collected the 2 routine water samples required for monthly bacteriological testing. The test results were received June 14th and indicated the presence of coliform bacteria in both samples. Randy immediately contacted the CDPH and began to collect the 12 repeat samples requested to try to determine the source of the contamination. Terry Mcaulay, District Engineer for the CDPH came to Squaw Valley to inspect the system and make recommendations. On June 15th the test

results showed 5 out of 12 repeat samples were positive for Total Coliform bacteria and the CDPH recommended Randy began chlorinating the system and issue a Boil Water Notice. The redwood tank was thought to be the likely source of contamination and should be drained, cleaned and chlorinated. Upon draining the redwood tank, Randy found several squirrels in the tank; the source of the contamination. With the squirrels removed, the tank was cleaned, chlorinated, and refilled. All holes that may have provided entry for rodents were located and repaired. Follow up samples were collected on June 19th and 20th throughout the system. All 14 samples were absent of Total Coliform bacteria and the Boil Water Notice was rescinded on June 22nd.

On July 10th Randy collected 6 water samples from the Mutual's system for monthly bacteriological testing. The results of these tests, received on July 12th, showed the presence of coliform bacteria in the samples taken from the lower portion of the system serviced by the redwood tank. Due to the previous month's contamination, chlorination of the system was started and a Boil Water Notice was issued on the evening of the 12th without waiting for the results of repeat samples. Repeat samples were taken on July 12th and 2 of the 6 samples were positive for Total Coliform bacteria. Again, the redwood tank was the most likely source of contamination. On July 15th the redwood tank was taken off line, drained, cleaned, and refilled. Once refilled the tank was [Continued on page 6]

Squaw Valley Mutual Water Co.
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Operations Manager
Randy Dresselhaus
Office Managers
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Website: www.svmutualwater.com

For SVMWC 530-583-3674

To Report problems: 530-582-7099

Newsletter Editor Margot Garcia
mgarcia@hsc.vcu.edu

Boil Water Notice Continued

chlorinated and let sit for 24 hours before being placed back into operation. Repeat samples were taken on July 19th and showed no presence of coliform bacteria and the Boil Water Notice was rescinded on July 20th. Following this second round of positive bacteriological tests Mike Burgess, Lassen District Sanitary Engineer for CDPH, visited Squaw Valley to inspect the system. The CDPH has recommended that the system be continuously chlorinated until further notice. The Mutual's Board of Directors is reviewing options for system improvements, including the replacement of the redwood tank. If Members have questions regarding Boil Water Notices they can contact Maintenance & Operations Manager Randy Dresselhaus at (530) 582-7099.

**Squaw Valley Mutual Water
Company**
P.O. Box 2776
Olympic Valley, CA 96146

