

Squaw Valley Mutual Water Company Newsletter

Winter 2010

P.O. Box 2276, Olympic Valley, CA 96146-2276

Fall Water Problem Handled; All is Well

Included in this newsletter is a notice the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has required the Mutual to send to all its members, not just the six houses on Squaw Summit Road that were affected.

Please note that the presence of Total Coliform found in November has been corrected and it only affected the six houses. This is what happened. The quarterly water quality sample taken October 30, 2009 from the upper system showed the presence of Total Coliform (bacteria). In this system, the horizontal well feeds water to the upper steel tank that provides water to the six homes on Squaw Summit Road. The bacteria found in a Total Coliform count are not in themselves harmful, so a "boil water" notice was not required. The Total Coliform test is used because it can indicate that there may be other contaminants. What was the cause since a visual search of the system showed no places where something could get in?

As soon as he was notified of the problem, Operations Manager John Collins took water samples from four of the houses on Squaw Summit Road and Total Coliform test indicated they were present. On November 6, he sampled again the upper steel tank and the horizontal well and both tested positive for Total Coliform. The horizontal well box was cleaned and chlorinated. The upper steel tank was chlorinated and the system flushed. Repeat testing on December 9 at five houses on Squaw Summit showed an absence of Total Coliform.

John remembered that there had been a similar problem last year (2008) in the fall. Finding [continued on page 3 Coliform]

Capital Improvements Update

The redwood tank replacement project is completed, the tank accepted and paid for. The total budgeted was \$507,000. The total expenditures were \$ 328,714.27. The Mutual collected \$352,398 in assessments and loan payments. (174 lots have paid in full, 106 lots are on a payment plan and 1 lot has paid nothing). That leaves cash in hand of \$25, 684.73. We have been using this money to pay for the engineering work necessary for the next phases.

The surveying has been completed for Phases II-V. The maps prepared show detailed elevations which provide Steve Brigman of Shaw Engineering sufficient detail to develop construction drawings and engineering analysis of options to meet our goals of reliable delivery of pure water and adequate flow for fire protection.

Construction drawings are completed for Phase II and Phase III.

Phase II is the placement of approximately 1,333 feet of an 8-inch distribution line in Christy Lane. This new 8-inch pipe will permit meeting required spacing for fire hydrants in this area. Originally the idea had been to abandon the line behind the residences forcing the homeowners to move their connections from the back of the house to the front of the house. The thinking now is that the back line can be left as is, and the owners will have the option to connect to the new waterline in the street. The cost is estimated at \$332,956.00 (\$1,185 per lot).

Phase III is adding houses on Apache and Navajo to the upper water system in order to improve their water pressure, which is now substandard. Computer modeling of the system shows that this change will improve fire flow throughout the rest of the water system. The estimated cost is \$459,148 (\$1,635 per lot). This is 40% higher than the estimate in the Auerbach

Master Plan due to adding 752 feet of 8-inch main, and 2 large pressure reducing valves (costing \$60,000 each) that are needed to limit pressure to 80 psi, which would improve the service life of the entire water system.

These projects are ready for construction this summer. The issue is financing. The earlier estimate of per lot cost for phases II-V was \$10,622. A special assessment of \$2,820 would cover phases II and III.

Phases IV and V

Steve Brigman was asked to further analyze these two phases that were recommended in the Auerbach report. The recommendation had been to replace the service line behind the houses on Sandy Way with a water main in the street. This would require the houses to move their connections from the rear of the house to the front, causing great disruption and cost to our members. Steve Brigman has suggested several alternatives that meet our goals of improved fire flow and reliable water service. He recommends putting an 8 inch main in Sandy Way for fire hydrant connections and also a main in Squaw Valley Road since most of our members along that road do not have fire hydrants within 250 feet of their homes. He has developed several options that meet the California Fire Code.

- Option 1 would replace the existing rear lot mains with an 8 inch pipe at an estimated cost of \$889,865.
- Option 2 would place a new 8 inch main in the roadways, leaving the old line behind the houses in place, at an estimated cost of \$1,171,210. The higher cost is driven by the cost of repaving the road (\$141,000) and more feet of pipe (\$337,200). Connecting to the new main is homeowner's cost.
- Option 3 is to abandon rear lot line mains, put new service boxes at the front of the house, and put in new lateral lines from the front service boxes to the house connections behind the houses (cost is \$725,000 for 139 lots). The total cost is estimated at \$2,853,602.

These options are open for discussion as we struggle to do what is best for the water system and what we can afford. Your input is welcomed.

Grant Applications

The SVMWC Board is constantly searching for ways to reduce the cost of the needed capital improvements. This fall the Mutual applied to CDPH for five different grants, one for each of Phases II, III, IV and V and one to install meters. The grant applications have been accepted and in April or May the winners will be announced. The "grants" may be an outright grant of funds, or a government subsidized and backed loan. That depends on the number of applicants, the amount of money available and the neediness of the system.

Cory Giese has filled out a lengthy preapplication on behalf of the Mutual for a low interest loan from the federal government under the USDA Rural Development Program. This application for \$3,949,564 covers the entire capital improvement plan as well as metering. In order for the application to be considered it had to contain metering. (For a discussion of metering see below). The Mutual's preapplication has been accepted and we must file a formal application by May 31, 2010. The cost to assemble all the required information, including engineering report, will probably be about \$30,000.

Water Meters

To meter or not to meter has been a longtime and hotly debated issue. Strong opinions have been expressed on both sides. The time is approaching, and probably this spring, when the Mutual will have to decide. It only makes economic sense when the Mutual is replacing service boxes to build them to accept meters. That suggests that in the future there may be metering. Here are some of the arguments.

For metering:

-Meter readings help the Mutual discover where there are leaks in the system.

-Meter readings can help individual members know more accurately how much water they are using.

- Having water priced according to amount used is more equitable. Now the second home user and the full time resident pay the same amount.

- In times of drought it may be necessary to regulate how much water is used and without meters, that would be very difficult.

Against metering:

- This is a mutual water company and all the owners are in this together.

- It is an extra expense to put in meters and even with automated meters add the personnel to read the meters and develop individual bills.

What is your opinion? Write us and let us know.

Continued from pg 1 Coliform

bacteria in the horizontal well water probably are the result of the following series of events. During a dry summer the soil on the forest floor dries and large pore spaces between the soil particles develop. When the first fall rains, (on October 13-15, 2009, 5"-7" of rain fell) the water "washes" the forest floor and it rapidly infiltrates into the soil, filling the soil pores with moisture that contains dust and microbes. The dried organic parts of the soil (humus) absorb the water and slowly expand, creating a filter for subsequent precipitation. But in Squaw Valley's thin forest soils, the first rains get to bedrock quickly and are captured at the horizontal wells before the soil "filter" has formed. In a few days, depending on the amount of rain, the soil is acting as a filter, capturing the bacteria, which the soil microbes decompose. The horizontal well is again producing very pure water, as it has for years, that meets all federal and state standards. Now that the Mutual understands the issue, we can try to be proactive next year. As the first rains fall, we may chlorinate the upper system and try to prevent a finding of Total Coliform. Our goal is pure water 100% of the time.

Next Board Meeting
March 27, 2010 at 4:00 pm
PSD Community Room

Summary Board Meetings

December 20, 2009

& February 27, 2010

On Sunday, December 20, the Board met to monitor progress on the capital improvement project, especially on the financing. The Mutual has been in negotiation with Plumas Bank on financing the capital projects. They had put a deadline of December 30, 2009 to sign their proposal. The Board did not feel ready to do so since they did not know how much the project would cost. Therefore they suspended negotiations with the bank at this time. Also the Board was hopeful some of the grant applications mentioned would be successful.

By electronic vote, the Board accepted the new steel tank as completed and has filed the information with the county recorder.

On February 27, 2010 the Board met to hear a report from Steve Brigman on his design for Phases II and III and his analysis of how to accomplish the goals of Phases IV and V. The front page article details his analysis and findings. The Board also looked at the financials.

One issue that will need member cooperation is easements. In order for a pipe, fire hydrant, or service box to be put on a member's property, that member must grant an easement to the Mutual Water Company. In modern subdivisions, utility easements are automatically designated around all four sides of a property. When the houses were built here, no such easements were recorded, pipes laid as needed, and houses placed where the builder thought was best. There are legal easements for most of our water pipes, but not all pipes are in their recorded easements. Therefore, you may be contacted to grant an easement for a fire hydrant, a service box or a pipe to be placed on your property. The Board fervently hopes you will be cooperative with the request, recognizing that the improvement benefits you, your neighbors, and the whole system.

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welcome.

Water Production (in million gallons)

	December	January	February
2008	1.831	3.761*	2.196
2009	2.798	2.027	2.094
2010		1.668	

* There was a major pipe break and leak which resulted in the high water use.

Congratulations to SVMWC Board Member Alisa Adriani and her husband Luca on the birth of their son Elio Emiliano on February 3, 2010. The family is at home after baby Elio underwent a life-saving operation for a blocked intestine at Stanford Medical Hospital. Our best wishes to Elio for a healthy, happy, and long life.

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