



NEWS SPLASH

Autumn 2009

UNDERSTANDING CONSERVATION BASED WATER RATES

What costs do my water rates cover?

The Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District is authorized to set and collect rates under Washington state law. Funds collected cover water quality monitoring costs, water treatment products and supplies, maintenance and repair of water facilities, debt payments, planning and engineering, operating and emergency reserves, salaries and benefits, office supplies, insurance and bonds, and repair and replacement of water infrastructure. The District recently implemented a 7% water rate increase, which was adopted by the Board of Commissioners and became effective on utility bills as of August 22, 2009. The rate increase covers maintenance, repair and replacement costs that increase over time, costs due to meeting new regulatory requirements, increased costs for water treatment and inflationary costs. Our customers pay less than a penny per gallon for the water that comes into their homes!

How are my water rates structured?

In addition to a base charge, single family customer rates are set up in four blocks or tiers, in what is known as a **conservation based rate structure**. This rate structure has a per unit charge that increases as water consumption increases and provides a rate incentive for consumers to manage their water consumption and the subsequent demands on the water supply system.

The current rate structure can be seen below (one cubic foot equals approximately 7.48 gallons):

Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Usage within 0 – 1,200 cubic feet	Usage within 1,200 – 2,400 cubic feet	Usage within 2,400 – 5,000 cubic feet	Usage 5,001 cubic feet and above
\$.0189 per cubic foot	\$.0238 per cubic foot	\$.0285 per cubic foot	\$.0477 per cubic foot

For example, if Customer A uses 1,200 cubic feet in a bi-monthly billing period, all of their water will be charged at \$.0189 per cubic foot. If Customer B uses 2,400 cubic feet, 1,200 cubic feet will be charged at \$.0189 per cubic foot and 1,200 cubic feet will be charged at \$.0238 per cubic foot. The more water the customer consumes means more water will be charged at the higher block rates.

Why are conservation based water rate structures used?

Many utilities recognize that water is a limited resource and should be used wisely. Consumers tend to respond to price signals, and higher water bills may lead to lower water consumption over time. Conservation rate structures cause customers to weigh the differences between the use of water for necessities such as sanitation, cooking and cleaning against using water for discretionary uses such as lawn watering, car washing and filling swimming pools. Customers who choose to use water for these optional purposes may find that their rates fall into the higher blocks during the summer, when water usage tends to increase with outdoor lawn and garden watering. Conserving water can help customers receive lower water bills and help them remain within the lower tiers of the rate structure. A reduction in consumption can mean savings in maintenance and operation costs for the water utility. In addition, the District implements conservation rate based structures as a measure to meet the requirements of the Water Use Efficiency Rule, regulated by the Washington Department of Health. For more information about your water rates, please go to our website at www.sammplat.wa.org or call our customer service department at (425) 392-6256.

Some of the material in this article is adapted from information from the Washington Department of Health Office of Drinking Water and the American Water Works Association Research Foundation.

MEET OUR NEWEST COMMISSIONER, BOB ABBOTT

Bob first moved to the Sammamish Plateau in 1983 and has lived a total of eighteen years in the Sammamish Plateau Water and Sewer District. He and his wife, Diana, have raised four daughters here, all of whom attended Skyline High School. He is a biotechnology entrepreneur who has founded or grown half a dozen small biopharmaceutical companies, three of which have become public companies. Bob earned a Bachelor of Science degree in genetics and biochemistry, as well as a Doctorate of Philosophy in pathology from McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Missouri in St. Louis. His civic involvement has included membership on two City of Sammamish Town Center Advisory Committees, the Governor's Biotechnology Targeted Sector Advisory Committee, serving as a commercial reviewer for Washington State's Life Sciences Discovery Fund, a director for the Washington Technology Center at the University of Washington, and president and director of his homeowner's association board.



STORING WATER FOR EMERGENCIES

To be prepared for a drinking water emergency, the Washington Department of Health recommends the following:

- Store one gallon of water per person per day. Keep at least a three day supply of water per person.
- Use proper storage containers. **Never** use jugs previously used for storing chemicals, bleach, pesticides, solvents, antifreeze, etc. You can purchase five gallon water containers at most hardware or sporting goods stores. Be sure to change out water every two to six months to keep it fresh.
- Storing bottled water is a good option. If you store bottled water, be sure to change it out annually.



If a safe supply of water is not available, such as during a prolonged emergency or a contamination incident, it should be treated before being used.

Boiling:

Boiling is the best way to purify water that is unsafe because of the presence of protozoan parasites or bacteria. Boiling should not be used when toxic metals or chemicals have contaminated the water.

- Place the water in a clean metal or glass container and bring to a full boil.

- Continue boiling for three to five minutes.
- Cover boiled water while cooling, then transfer to the appropriate storage container.
- Keep a propane stove, such as a camping stove, handy for boiling water. Remember that your usual source of energy may not be available during an emergency.

Purifying by Adding Liquid Chlorine Bleach:

If boiling is not possible, you can use household liquid bleach to kill microorganisms.

- Use only regular household liquid bleach that contains 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. Do not use scented bleaches, color safe bleaches or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Add 16 drops of bleach per gallon of water (about 1/4 teaspoon), stir and let stand for 30 minutes. If the water does not have a slight bleach odor, repeat the dosage and let stand another 15 minutes.

Please note: The treatments described above work only in situations where the water is unsafe because of the presence of bacteria. If you suspect the water is unsafe because of chemicals, oils, poisonous substances, sewage, etc. do not use the water for drinking.

WINTERIZATION QUICK TIPS

- * Drain and disconnect all hoses.
- * Cover all hose spigots with protective coverings.
- * Insulate all pipes in unheated crawl spaces.
- * Turn off and blow out all irrigation systems.
- * Locate and clearly mark your master valve.



**SAMMAMISH PLATEAU
WATER AND SEWER
DISTRICT**

**1510 228th Ave SE
Sammamish, WA 98075
(425) 392-6256
www.sammplat.wa.org**