



CITY OF BISHOP

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Water and Sewer Commission News Release

Putting Water and Sewer Fees to Work

City of Bishop water is just about the very best in the world. It is part of what makes Bishop the great place it is. Bishop water and sewer fees are essential to ensure our water stays its very best and are essential to the safety of the city water and sewer systems.

The City of Bishop provides water for domestic use and provides sewage disposal to residents and businesses within the city limits. The wells, pipes, manholes, and treatment plants that provide these services have been constructed and operated since the City of Bishop was formed in 1903. Some parts of the water and sewer systems are almost as old as the city itself and many parts of the systems have exceeded their useful lives. At the same time, while the systems age they face ever more stringent health, fire, and environmental requirements.

City of Bishop water and sewer fees are set at the lowest level that will allow:

- Replacement of deteriorated pipes and facilities before they collapse
- Larger and more pipes and new hydrants so the fire department has enough water to fight fires
- The addition and operation of equipment required by new health and environmental requirements
- Other improvements that reduce the overall costs to operate the systems
- The maintenance of prudent cash reserves for emergencies

Water and sewer funds are kept completely separate from each other and are kept completely separate from other city funds. The city's water and sewer accounts are subject to independent audit each year.

In 2003 water and sewer accounts were almost out of money. Money was depleted because of increasing costs of the aging systems and because of the high cost to meet state and federal health and environmental requirements. To avoid financial crisis, the city adopted a series of rate increases starting in 2004. The rate increases allow needed basic maintenance and operation of the systems to continue while avoiding serious financial crisis in the event of an expensive breakdown. In addition, the increases make the city eligible for more state and federal grants to pay for needed system improvements. Finally, where grant funding is not available, the increases allow for city-funded replacement and improvement projects. Projects complete so far include the following major projects and purchases:

- **Well 2 Improvements** – Changed well motor and controls to make production well more dependable and to reduce the cost of operating the well. \$88,000.
- **Well 1 Improvements** – Repaired motor, improved controls, and attempted to correct high fluoride in standby well. \$134,000.
- **Well 2 Loop** – Constructed new water main loop to Sierra Street to improve fire flows and efficiency. \$27,000.
- **Water and Sewer Master Plan** – Comprehensive analysis of water and sewer systems to identify deficiencies, identify grant opportunities, and plan long term improvements. \$183,500.
- **Sewer Cleaner Truck** – Replacement for 1950's vintage truck for clearing plugged sewers. \$177,000
- **Future Projects** – Many more needed projects are planned over the next 20 years.

A series of two public meetings and one public hearing will be held to discuss the last of the rate increases scheduled to go into effect 1 July 2007. The Bishop Water and Sewer Commission will hold the two public meetings, the first at 7:00 pm in the Bishop City Council Chambers at 301 West Line Street, on 20 March and the second at 7:00 pm in the Bishop Auditorium at the northeast corner of West Line Street and Fowler Street on 24 April. The Bishop City Council will hold the public hearing in the Council Chambers at their regular meeting at 7:30 11 June 2007.

Starting in July a single family residence in Bishop will pay a \$52 per month flat rate (\$32 water and \$20 sewer). For comparison, water and sewer rates for other communities are listed below.

Community	Basis	Water	Sewer	Total
Mammoth	Meter	\$12 (\$147*)	\$17	\$29 (\$164*)
June Lake	Meter	\$24	\$21	\$45
Highlands	Flat	\$30	\$17	\$47
Indian Creek	Flat	\$30	\$22	\$52
Bishop	Flat	\$30	\$22	\$52
Alturas	Meter	Combined	Combined	\$53
Tehachapi	Meter	Combined	Combined	\$66
Wilkerson	Flat	Combined	Combined	\$70

Most meter rates shown are base rates. Fees typically escalate for any use more than bare minimum. For instance:

*If a customer in Mammoth used water at the average rate Bishop customers use water, their average monthly water bill would be \$147 plus sewer, \$164 total.

It is important to note some of the communities with lower rates report they are almost out of money, much as Bishop was in 2003, and are considering rate increases. In some

cases the situation is serious enough that one-time fees over \$1,000 per residence will be required.

The City of Bishop Water and Sewer Commission advises the city on all water and sewer matters. In addition to the two public meetings scheduled in March and April, the five member citizen commission meets regularly in the Bishop City Council Chambers at 7 pm the second Tuesday of odd-numbered months. Public involvement is always welcomed. Information is also available on the City of Bishop web site.

For more information contact City of Bishop Public Works at 760-873-8458 or publicworks@ca-bishop.us.