



■ **News from
Southwest Water
Authority**

■ **April 2002**

Water works



Volume 5 ■ Issue 2

Manager's Message ■ by Ray Christensen, Manager/CEO

Declining Block Rate on the way for rural customers

The goal of the Southwest Water Authority (SWA) Rate Structure Study Committee is to stabilize water rates. In order to meet that goal, the committee adopted a Strategic Plan to address rate structure issues. Strategies include: 1) sell more water; 2) minimize future debt obligations; 3) stabilize operating costs; and 4) reduce the number of zero usage customers (in proportion to other users).



*Ray Christensen
Manager/CEO*

While the Rate Structure Study Committee continues to further review strategies to meet their goal, they have concentrated their efforts on Strategy 1. After an intense review, they have concluded the best way to sell more water is to offer reduced rates to encourage livestock watering. If producers are to consider watering their livestock, the committee felt it was necessary to make the water as affordable as possible. As an incentive to producers, the committee recommended

a proposal to the Board of Directors to implement a Declining Block Rate, on an experimental basis, for those rural customers who exceed 10,000 gallons per month. The Board adopted the proposal in March and set goals to measure its success at the end of three years.

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Glen Ullin couple wins 10,000 gallons of water!



Timothy and Diane Christian of Glen Ullin recently won 10,000 gallons of Southwest Pipeline Project water in a drawing sponsored by Southwest Water Authority (SWA). The drawing was held in conjunction with a recent customer satisfaction survey of SWA customers.

SWA survey drawing winners are Diane, Tim and Rylee Christian of Glen Ullin.

Golva votes "yes" for water

Golva residents will soon have something they've long waited for – Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP) water. Residents voted to receive SWPP water, 25 to 6 in favor, in a March 26 special election.

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■ by Sheyna Strommen, LoAnn’s Marketing Inc.

The final step – connecting your house to the pipeline!

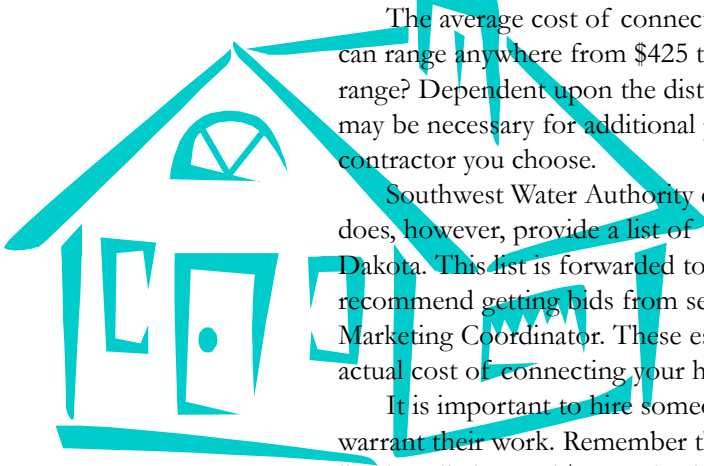
The water is so close to your house you can taste it! Now all that’s left to be done is to hook up your house or pasture tap to the main line. So what will that cost? That depends – mainly on the general contractor you select but partially on the distance between your house and the main line.

The average cost of connecting pasture taps and/or houses to the main line is \$550, but can range anywhere from \$425 to \$885, according to a recent random spot check. Why the range? Dependent upon the distance between your house and the main line, more money may be necessary for additional piping and trenching. The range could also depend on the contractor you choose.

Southwest Water Authority does not recommend any general contractor. The Authority does, however, provide a list of all possible plumbers/contractors in southwest North Dakota. This list is forwarded to SWA by the North Dakota State Plumbing Board. “We recommend getting bids from several local contractors,” said Glenn Eckelberg, SWA Marketing Coordinator. These estimates will provide you with a clearer picture of what the actual cost of connecting your house to the main line may be.

It is important to hire someone that will stand behind their work. You may want them to warrant their work. Remember that you are responsible for any leaks related to your service line installation and/or service hookup including loss of water and any necessary repair work.

For further information on connecting your house to the pipeline, contact SWA at 701-225-0241 or toll fee at 1-888-425-0241.



News from the SWA office

Staff attends training

Members of SWA staff recently attended a number of training sessions:

- Defensive Driving Training: Carol Schmaltz, Sandy Burwick, Glenn Eckelberg, Allen Hecker, Dan Roller, Todd Gordon, Andy Erickson, and Shawn Bilquist
- Internet-based Training in Quattro Pro and Fixed Assets: Sandy Burwick
- Water distribution training: Dale Binstock, Allen Hecker, and Russ Kostelecky
- CPR/First Aid: Todd Gordon, Andy Erickson, and Steve Ries.



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
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Coffee Shop ■ by Glenn Eckelberg, Marketing Coordinator

Please return necessary easements as soon as possible

The 2002 construction season is about to begin for the Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP). Priorities for the season are completion of Phase 1 and 2 of the Twin Buttes Service Area. The second phase will include rural customers west, south and north of Bowman and Rhame, the city of Amidon and surrounding area.

One of the most important aspects of construction is the acquisition of right-of-way. Customers in Phase 2 of the Twin Buttes Service Area have recently received easement requests. Easements are an extremely time consuming process. What part can you play? By granting an easement when asked, you are helping yourself and your neighbors receive quality water service. Remember, someone gave the SWPP an easement to allow them to provide you service.

With the late spring and busy season fast approaching, please take the time now and return the necessary easements. With your help, construction can begin and be completed in a timely manner.

With so much to do and so little time to do it, remember to take the time to be safe! Please be careful during this busy season. It only takes a second for an accident to happen, but a lifetime to deal with its effects. From the staff at Southwest Water Authority, have a safe and happy summer!

Check out
our
Web
site!



www.swa.swc.state.nd.us

Construction Update ■ by Dan Farrell, Water Resource Engineer

2002 Construction season begins

Construction efforts have been renewed with the spring weather in southwestern North Dakota. The contractor for the Twin Buttes Service Area main transmission line, Nygard Construction Inc. has resumed installation to the Twin Buttes Reservoir north of Bowman. The date for completion is July 1, 2002.

Abbott, Arne and Schwindt Inc. plans to resume installation of the rural water systems under Contract 7-7A in early May 2002. This contract includes approximately 123.2 miles of water pipe ranging in size from 6" to 1½" in diameter. The completion date is set for September 1, 2002, when an estimated 110 users will be connected to the Southwest Pipeline Project (SWPP).

In addition, work is set to continue at the second New England tank site and Twin Buttes Reservoir. The Twin Buttes tank is scheduled to be completed by July 1, 2002, and will add approximately 250,000 gallons to the capacity of the SWPP. The second New England tank is scheduled for completion by August 15, 2002, adding approximately 1,240,000 gallons to the project's capacity when complete.

Bids were opened April 10, 2002, for rural water line work in the Twin Buttes Regional Service Area west of Bowman. There were five bids presented with the apparent low bid of \$3,053,265.00 being presented by Abbott, Arne and Schwindt Construction Inc. of Moorhead, Minnesota. Other bidders included Northern Improvement, \$3,076,823.50; Earthly Constructors, \$3,195,055.20; and Nygard Construction, \$3,400,682.00. The fifth bid from Duffield Construction was not opened due to irregularities in the contractors' license. These bids are under review by the project engineers and staff at the ND State Water Commission. Once the contract is awarded, the contractor will have a final completion date of August 1, 2003, when approximately 139 users will be connected to the project.

Design and planning efforts continue on the Medora/Beach Phase. The project engineers and project manager have participated in several community meetings with presentations and information. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2003, depending on the level of funding available at the state and federal level.

ATTENTION SWA CUSTOMERS!

We would like your
911 address for our records.
Please call 1-888-425-0241
or e-mail swa@swwater.
Thank you!

Vickie's Water Notes ■ by Vickie Franchuk, Customer Service**How to detect water leaks in your system**

Determine a possible leak in your system by monitoring the remote readout for your meter. If you are not using water, the numbers on the meter should not rotate. Inspect your house for drips and wet spots. Check faucets and toilet valves, and listen to fixtures for sounds of flowing water.

To check for faucet leaks: Turn on all of the faucets in your home, one by one. While the water is running, move the faucet handle back and forth, looking for water leakage around the valve stem and faucet spout. When checking the faucets, be sure to look at the drain piping for leaks as water flows through the drain pipes.

To check for toilet leaks: Place food coloring into a toilet tank full of water. Wait for a few minutes and see if it seeps down into the bowl area. If it does, your tank is overfilling and you will need to repair or replace the flapper valve.

To check for concealed water leaks:

Basement Meter Method: Check all faucets inside and outside of your home to make sure all are off. Go to your water meter and mark the dial with a crayon. With everything kept off, recheck the meter in one hour. If the meter dial has moved, you probably have some type of a leak.

Meter Pit Method: Read the remote meter and make sure no water is used over a reasonable period of time – overnight, for example. When the time has elapsed, take another meter reading. If there are water leaks in your household system, the meter reading will have changed. The difference between the first and second readings will show how much water passed through the meter during the time taps were not being used. With this method, however, smaller leaks are harder to find.

If you need further information on detecting leaks or have questions, please feel free to call our office toll free 1-888-425-0241, or e-mail swa@swwater.com.

**SWA satellite
offices now open!**

Elgin
Shawn Bilquist

Reeder
Andrew Erickson

1-888-425-0241

New employees added to SWA staff

Andrew Erickson, Jr. and Todd Gordon recently joined the staff at Southwest Water Authority (SWA).



Andrew Erickson, Jr.

Erickson is the Water Distribution Maintenance Worker II representative for the North Lemmon to Bowman area. Located at the satellite office in Reeder, he is responsible for maintenance and customer service in Bowman, Adams, Hettinger, and Slope counties. Erickson is a Hettinger native and currently resides in Reeder.

Gordon joins SWA as a maintenance electrician. His primary responsibilities are the maintenance of all electrical distribution and treatment equipment, the cathodic protection system, and SCADA telemetry system. He will also work in water distribution and acquire certification when eligible. He and his wife, Tammy, reside in rural New England with their son Blake, 8, and daughter Erin, 2.



Todd Gordon

Golva votes yes

(continued from front)

“The city council is pleased with the outcome,” said Bobbie Maus, City Auditor. Golva residents will see a water rate increase, but that is a price they are willing to pay. “Quality water is a necessity of life,” said Maus. “The new rates will not be much different than the current rates.”

A crucial factor in the resident’s vote was the information provided by the entities involved. “The community really appreciated the information and presentations by Ray Christensen, SWA Manager/CEO; Glenn Eckelberg, SWA Marketing Coordinator; Joe Bichler, Vice President, Bartlett & West/Boyle Engineering Corp.; and Jim Lennington, Project Manager,” commented Beach resident and SWA Director Darrel Oech. “SWA staff played an important role by providing timely and accurate information to Golva.”

“We’re thrilled that Golva came on board,” said Walter Mattson, Beach resident and SWA Director. “The Golva area had one of the strongest rural sign-ups in the county. They have been very supportive of SWPP throughout the years.”

Golva will be included in the Medora/Beach Phase of the SWPP, which is expected to begin construction in 2003, with completion in 2007, pending funding availability.



Declining Block Rate

(continued from front)

The success of this plan will be evaluated by SWA staff and will include the following considerations: increase of water sales attributed to the Declining Block Rate for current customers; overall impact on system operation; and impact on distribution budget. This information will be provided to the Board along with a recommendation as to whether or not the Declining Block Rate should be continued.

Why would the Board do this? SWA has a considerable amount of fixed costs such as salaries, vehicles, supplies, and overhead that must be paid regardless of how much water is sold. A decrease in rates that will raise water sales significantly can increase total revenue. Increased usage will also minimize some of our water system turnover problems in rural areas. In some areas, we must flush water to maintain adequate chlorine residuals. It makes good sense to sell this water at a reduced rate rather than waste it. Increased usage would also provide a more efficient distribution system.

The Declining Block Rate will not impact minimum payments but will reduce the water rate thereafter by \$1.00 per thousand gallons for each thousand gallons in excess of 10,000 gallons of usage per month. Based on the current rate of \$3.60 per thousand, the rate would be reduced to \$2.60 per thousand for all water used in excess of 10,000 gallons per month. Pasture taps would be prorated on a six month basis, with all water in excess of 60,000 gallons annually billed at \$2.60 per thousand gallons. Because it is very difficult to determine whether or not the rate reduction will encourage additional water use by livestock producers, we are offering this rate on an experimental basis over the next three years. This option will be made available in the near future, probably by July 1, 2002.

We also plan to make available study information on the impact of providing quality water to livestock. Studies we have referenced show a significant impact on weight gain and mortality rates for producers who use quality water. We certainly encourage livestock producers to take advantage of this offer. As noted earlier, this offer also applies to gardeners and those of you who water lawns or use water for whatever reason in excess of 10,000 gallons per month. Should you have any questions concerning this issue, please contact our office.



Southwest Water Authority Board of Directors

To obtain information in your area regarding SWA, contact your county or city representative.

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