

# Hearings set on Cal Cities water rate increase request

By Cindy Blankenburg

NIPOMO — Residents have about a month to respond to a California Cities request for a various water rate increase which would boost bills by 88 percent by 1996.

The California Public Utilities Commission has scheduled evidentiary hearings for Sept. 22 to 25 on all of Southern California Water Company's requests for rate increases. Southern California Water Company is the parent company for California Cities Water District.

Larry Lustig, assistant public advisor for the CPUC, said California Cities Water is asking for a \$1.2 million general rate increase in 1993; a \$306,000 general rate increase for 1994 and a \$369,000 general rate increase for 1995.

In June, the CPUC held a local public hearing on the increase which would cost customers 31 percent more in 1993, 6 percent more in 1994 and 6 percent more in 1995, according to Roger Brett, superintendent for the Santa Maria service area.

The increase will cover various projects including a new well costing \$400,000, a new reservoir in the Orcutt Hills area costing \$1 million, and a roof on the Lake Marie

reservoir costing \$100,000, he said.

Rates also cover \$300,000 to retain the rights to 3,000 acre-feet of state water.

The average customer uses 2,500 cubic feet of water per month, which currently means a \$24 water bill.

Connection fees will range from \$3,000 for residences to \$20,000 for 10-inch meter pipelines, but there are none that size currently in service.

Concurrently, California Cities has applied to the CPUC for another rate increase to cover the projected 7,900-acre-foot entitlement of water from the California State Water Project.

The utility company has requested a \$2.3 million or 45.1 percent increase in revenues in the Santa Maria District.

The application seeks a service connection fee for new services and an increase in rates to its general metered, limited metered irrigation, and private fire service tariffs related to the company's participation in the Coastal Aqueduct (Project), according to the public notice about the application.

California Cities share of the project's capital cost is estimated at

\$73 million.

The effect would mean a customer using 2,500 cubic feet a month will pay an additional \$14.35 per month, in addition to the general rate increase.

And, by the year 1996, customers would pay another increase of \$12.25 per month.

Letters can be sent about the increases anytime before the hearings, said Lustig.

No hearing date has been set to consider the proposed increase relating to state water. He expects that dates for hearings will be decided by the end of August.

Letters can be sent to California Public Utilities Commission, 505 Van Ness Ave., San Francisco, CA 94102, attn: Public Advisor; or California Public Utilities Commission, 107 S. Broadway, room 5109, Los Angeles, 90012, attn: Public Advisor.

Those people who send letters will receive up-to-date information about the proposals, Lustig said.

Letters from customers are given to the four commissioners for review and to the judge and are included in the official information packets.

## Nipomo water rates to rise 50%

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NIPOMO — Water customers in

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increased, but use fees have not.

Ryder Ray, general manager of

Ray, however, said the income generated by the increase is \$37,547 more than needed which could make