



Public hearing set on water rate hike plan

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Beginning in January 2011, more than 13,000 Central Coast water customers could see their rates go up 25 percent.

Golden State Water Company has scheduled a public hearing Tuesday on proposed water rate hikes.

GSWC officials will describe a plan for rate bumps in 2011 and 2012 during

the meeting from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the Lakeview Junior High School, 3700 Orcutt Road.

The San Dimas-based company serves customers in all or portions of Santa Maria, Orcutt, Nipomo, San Luis Obispo, and portions of San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties.

Earlier this month, GSWC filed an application with the California Public Utilities Commission to set new rates meant to cover the escalating cost to operate and maintain the local water system, and to fund more than \$14.1 million in capital improvements.

If approved, a residential customer with a five-eighths-inch meter using 21 units of water a month — one unit is equal to 100 cubic feet of water or 748 gallons — could expect to pay \$11.55 more per month in 2011 and an additional \$1.56 per month in 2012.

Based on the same average, the spike would be 25.3 percent for 2011 and 2.7 percent more for 2012.

The cost of a gallon of water would still be less than a penny with the proposed rates, according to GSWC officials.

GSWC operates five water systems in the Santa Maria Customer Service Area — Lake Marie, Nipomo, Orcutt, Sisquoc and Tanglewood.

New rates would take effect Jan. 1, 2011, and they would end Dec. 31, 2012.

GSWC plans to notify all customers about the proposed rates and the public meeting by mail.

More information is available at www.gswater.com.