



NCSD supplemental water rates

SEPTEMBER 29, 2014 8:00 PM • [MIKE HODGSON MHODGSON@LEECENTRALCOASTNEWS.COM](mailto:MIKE.HODGSON@LEECENTRALCOASTNEWS.COM)

Nipomo Community Services District customers will soon receive ballots for proposed supplemental water rates after NCSD directors approved a rate study and authorized a Proposition 218 vote last week.

In addition to approving the study prepared by Tuckfield and Associates, the board authorized the staff to prepare Prop. 218 ballots and scheduled Friday, Nov. 21, for a public hearing on the new rates.

If more than 50 percent of the district's property owners and customers do not file written protests over the proposed rates, NCSD could institute the new rates to cover the cost of supplemental water purchased from Santa Maria and the cost of building a pipeline system to deliver it.

As soon as water begins flowing through the pipeline at a rate of 645 acre-feet per year, anticipated July 1, 2015, the supplemental water rates would be added to the district's regular water service charges — which are already scheduled to increase 9.5 percent Nov. 1 and another 9.5 percent one year later.

That means the \$119.37 bill for the average single-family residence that uses 36 units of water per billing cycle would jump to \$160.43 as of Nov. 1, then would rise again to \$171.94 in November 2015.

Once the annual flow rises to 800 acre-feet, around July 1, 2016, the average bill would increase to \$180.19 and a year later would rise to \$181.56.

An acre-foot is about 326,000 gallons, or the amount of water generally considered necessary to supply the annual needs of four to 10 people in an urban environment.

Although there was organized opposition to the district's previous plan to pay for the water through property taxes, no one has mounted a campaign opposing the current proposal, which includes a small fixed fee plus use charges based on volume.

"I think our customers have been very understanding of this," said Michael LeBrun, NCSD general manager. "That doesn't mean they're overwhelmingly happy with it, because it will be a significant change for them."

But he noted bringing in supplemental water now will stave off even higher costs and more inconvenience in the future.

"While adding a developed water source to our supply mix will significantly increase costs, it will also lower the likelihood our customers would ever face the drastic rates and rationing of water seen today in Los Osos and Cambria," LeBrun said.

NCSD is the lead agency in the project to purchase supplemental water from Santa Maria to offset the amount being pumped from the groundwater basin under the Nipomo Mesa.

The district will receive 70 percent of the water — and cover 70 percent of the costs — with the rest allocated to Woodlands Mutual Water Co., Golden State Water Co. and Rural Water Co.

With NCSD's tiered rate structure, some customers may be facing 30 to 37 percent increases in the cost of their water, so LeBrum said the district expects them to cut back even more, further impacting district revenue.

“We do expect the average use of customers to continue to drop as they get used to using less water on their landscapes,” he said.

For more information about the proposed supplemental water rates, call NCSD at 929-1133, visit www.ncsd.ca.gov or stop by the office at 148 S. Wilson St.