

SCOTT POINT WATERWORKS DISTRICT

Trustees Respond to Comments on Proposed New Toll Structure

The trustees want to thank those residents who read the last newsletter and took time to make comments after reading the last newsletter which outlined a draft proposal to alter the water toll structure.

The primary responsibilities of SPWD trustees are two-fold: to ensure that the water delivered to residents is safe to drink, and that there is a reliable amount of water to meet the reasonable needs of all households. While the water continues to be safe, the increasing drought periods over the past few years has caused concern about whether our aquifer has sufficient water to serve Scott Point through extended periods without rain. The trustees implemented watering restrictions in the past two summers and most residents responded significantly. This has helped, but some higher users are still a challenge, and with the drought, we still find ourselves with significant draw-down of the aquifer.

The trustees have proposed revisions to the toll structure in an effort to incent all residents to conserve water during periods of drought. The outcome of that deliberation is to set the minimum billing volume at 3500 gallons per two-month period for the 6 months during which we have been experiencing drought.

The objective of this change is **decidedly not** a tax grab or intended to be financially punitive. But rather the change will hopefully provide incentive to all residents to chip in and protect our delicate aquifer from running too low during the summer months. Indeed, we would be delighted if no household used more than 3500 gallons per two-month period between May and October. Under the proposal and looking at July-August 2023 consumption, 20 properties would see a small charge for volumes in excess of 3500 gallons with an average extra charge of \$54 in the period. Larger charges would accrue to 6 properties with much higher usage.

Specific Questions (and responses) received from Residents

#1

We are so careful with our consumption but there is no way we can stay under 3500 with our guest suite. Don't think we have been over 5000 in recent years. Is there no way to target the abusers instead of limiting all to a minuscule 3500?

The proposed structure was contemplated due to a lack of response to the Watering Restrictions from a small number of users, despite direct messaging. The trustees are stuck with applying rules to all and cannot selectively apply charges. The 3500 gallons was chosen so that only a small number of larger users would be impacted – 2/3rds of residents would not see any changes.

#2

I have a few questions and concerns. If you are going to reduce water allocations in fairness to all it should also include winter months. Also, the 2-month staggering should be changed to split July and August for all homes especially for those homes that have very low usage or NO usage for 7 months of the year and then due to large amounts of family and guests in those months water consumption increases.

The whole point of the proposed changes was to target high consumption in the months of lowest precipitation and highest demand.

However, on an annual basis our personal consumption is probably less than many of the residents and I have been told previously there is no such thing as a full well. Thus water use October through April still depletes a wells capacity.

There IS such a thing as a full well. In most years, winter rainfall replenishes the aquifer and any additional rainfall runs off and does not add to the levels. When rainfall stops in the spring, the aquifer starts depleting. There are no issues with water use in November through April, but there certainly is after the seasonal rainfall ends.

Another alternative is to put in a desalination plant for activation to supplement the existing system. Look forward to your thoughts.

A full desalination plant is significantly more complicated than the current treatment. Such a plant would be costly (>\$250K), need a seawater pick-up on someone's foreshore, and have issues getting the necessary discharge permits. If we run out of groundwater, such a plant would be an option, but one not to be taken lightly, especially when conservation can get us all through.

#3

Thanks for all the work. It is an excellent report in a challenging environment.

I assume the \$1/gallon at 10,000 gallons is still in place – it was not noted below and maybe could be added for clarity? If it is not and has been replaced by the 7000 gallon number, ignore me!

The punitive toll of \$1/gallon is still included in the toll design. This rate of consumption quickly depletes available groundwater supplies and still requires a strong response from the District. The proposed toll design adds another tranche before the punitive \$1/gallon level is reached.

#4

Hi, have you heard about a Moen product that automatically shuts off the water if there is a leak. It can also turn off/on the water remotely using your iphone. Does anyone on the Point have one of these?

We are aware of one resident that has such a system, but the District is not familiar with them. This type of system may identify leaks from things like taps and toilets. But closing the property line shut-off valve when away is the best defense against sudden leaks

#5

Thanks for putting this Newsletter together. Much appreciated.

One point I would make is that I would agree with the reduction of the Standard rate from 5000 gal to 3500 gal in the summer months, but this should be matched with a reduction of the standard fee otherwise the district are effectively increasing the per gal water rate by 43% (from \$0.032 per gal to \$0.046 per gal if my maths is right ! and would result in a bi monthly charge of \$112 instead of \$160 per household) which I don't think is acceptable. The increased per gal costs for going over the standard limit of 3500 (not 5000 as stated below!) makes sense to encourage conservation. Could you let me know if you think that this would make sense.

There is a misconception about the volume of water associated with the minimum bi-monthly bill. This misconception comes from the fact that most of the District's costs are fixed, whereas tolls are variable. The minimum bi-monthly bill is strictly to ensure a steady stream of income to meet the regular financial obligations. It simply incorrect to divide the minimum bi-monthly bill by the associated volume to arrive at an equivalent toll. You can think about the tolls as having both a fixed, and a variable charge.

#6

I am baffled by your Newsletter, specifically your intended governance changes given the information that was provided. I will break my comments and questions into three separate topics.

The Annual Consumption shown indicates that the numbers are actually decreasing over time. Yes, the chart rises up to the right but the year 2023 is on the left thus indicating that over time the annual consumption has been declining. Based in this it would seem reasonable to comment our collective good work and to ask us all to continue to strive in reducing the use of potable water.

- You indicate that, and I quote *"The winter rains have been enough to re-plenish the groundwater trapped in underground cracks in the rock that provide our water supply. There are currently no Watering Restrictions."*. This is good as we should be in a normal operating regime for the year.

- The chart of water levels in Well 4 is now below normal heading into our spring season. This is not good and I can see the need to advance the timing of the Water Restrictions would be prudent at this time.

- The Annual Groundwater Permit rate is less than permitted and has been relatively steady since the big decline from 2014. This is good.

- Well 3 was turned off for a period last year. I remember this has happened in previous years and should not be considered a rare or new situation. This is normal operation, unfortunately.

- you have also indicated that the leakage in the system has decreased slightly and this is also good. In summary the system is at near normal conditions with the trends downward in both consumption and diverted water. The only concern is the lower-than-normal level in Well 4 which may require an earlier than normal implementation of Water Restrictions.

These observations are all correct. But it should be noted that Well 4 has become our main well and that summer droughts seem to be starting earlier and lasting longer. The problem that the proposed toll design is trying to address is the small number of residents that do not respond to communicated concerns about consumption or that do not make adjustments to water consumption in response to Watering Restrictions.

Some residents are using more water than is considered acceptable, even with Trustees messages to reduce water usage.

- Have the Trustee's have discussed these concerns with those residents that are using more than acceptable amounts of water? What were the responses whether positive or negative?

For the past few years, every residence that consumes more than 3500 gallons in a single month is directly contacted about the levels of consumption and pointing out the possibility of a leak. In some cases, corrective action does not follow.

- Will the Trustees approach any of the residents that can be anticipated to use more than newly defined accepted amounts of water? Is so then when? If not then why not?

Trustees have the responsibility to treat all ratepayers equally. And as neighbours, trustees do not desire the complications that come with confrontation. Communication and the strategic use of toll design are the tools available.

-There is a lack of information that would be most helpful to me as a Resident of the District. Specifically, how am I doing when compared to the other residents? While I do not want to know the specific use of water by any individual residents. I would be most interested in a listing of anonymous property usages by month and so that we could compare ourselves with the other residents on the Point. I would really like to understand how we are doing compared to the other residents in the District.

The trustees are happy to provide this information upon request and will ensure all residents have to opportunity to ask

- You mentioned that we could reduce water consumption by installing rainwater capture. We have done this and have sufficient storage for our landscaping.

The trustees have been using the newsletters and website to communicate importance of installing rainwater capture for anyone contemplating gardening.

- You mention using less water. We have installed low flush toilets, high efficiency appliances, and make concerted efforts to use a minimum of water. Yet we will still be above the proposed levels. Therefore, I am very concerned that achieving the new limits may require us to vacate our home for one or two weeks er month or to do our laundry in Ganges.

The 3500 gallons was chosen so that only a small number of larger users would be impacted – more than 2/3rds of residents would not see any changes. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that gardening and bathing are the biggest water uses.

- I have a friend living on Bowen Island who expressed pride that by using rainwater captured for flushing toilets and in his laundry he has reduced his water consumption to 5,000 gallons per month. My very pressing question is whether you have any other suggestions that would allow us to reduce our water use?

As above, the proposal chose 3500 gallons so as to not impact most residents. Those that use between 3500 gallons and 5000 gallons would have a modest increase in bi-monthly bill, simply as an encouragement to use less. Some Conservation Tips are posted on the District's website at www.scottpointwaterworks.com under the Water Conservation tab.

-Given the information that has been provided I am very concerned that the changes to the rate structure may be both premature and not well considered.

The trustees have been discussing water consumption patterns and possible responses for a couple of years now. But as volunteers, it is possible that there are considerations we have not contemplated. Hence the reach out to all residents for their views. We thank you and everyone else who took the time to respond. The trustees will consider the input before any final decisions are made.