



WATER NEWS

AMADOR WATER AGENCY

www.amadorwa.com

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Economic Stimulus Funding

The new American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was passed in February of this year which will provide grant and loan money for both water and wastewater projects. The Agency aggressively pursues grant and low interest funding for infrastructure replacement, and strives to keep water and wastewater rates as low as possible. This year the Agency had an unprecedented opportunity to apply for California grants and loans for five major projects. Those projects are the Camanche Water System Improvement Projects, the Buckhorn Water Treatment Plant Backwash Reuse Project, and the Treated Waterline replacing the Raw Water Canal Project, the Gravity Supply Line, and the Gayla Manor Water Quality Improvement Project. These project summaries are listed below:

The existing Lake Camanche treated water distribution system has multiple service areas that operate independently with undersized storage tanks. **The project proposes to install a new million gallon storage tank and inter-tie the distribution system with approximately 15,000 feet of pipe. These improvements will allow the system to share well capacity, distribute water demands, provide additional storage, and eliminate the undersized, leaky redwood tanks.** The project also includes provisions for proper disinfection of the water by providing adequate chlorine contact time to meet State water treatment requirements.



The project proposes to eliminate the undersized, leaky redwood storage tanks.

The Buckhorn Water Treatment plant uses treated water to periodically clean filters. This water can be reused by enlarging storage ponds on the nearby Mace Meadows Golf Course by storing the water during the wet season and re-use during the irrigation season. Currently, the golf course must pump ground water to augment its irrigation needs. **The project will recycle over 60 acre-feet annually for irrigation use and reduce electrical demands for groundwater well pumping with subsequent reductions in green house emissions. Construction plans are complete and the Water Agency has received a waste discharge permit from the State Regional Water Control Board for this project.**

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The Amador Water Agency Customer Surveys...

Every quarter the AWA sends out Customer Surveys that ask customers a series of questions and has them rate their satisfaction. **However, a mere 30% of these surveys actually make it back to the Agency.** To help the Amador Water Agency serve you better, we're asking our customers to make an effort to return the surveys so that we can address areas for improvement. A stamped return envelope is now included with each survey.

Why Do Rates Go Up?

This is one of the most frequently asked questions we receive from our customers.

First, we need to briefly summarize what goes into the rates. Water and wastewater rates have several components. The rates include things such as labor costs, which include office staff answering phones and billing; engineering staff to resolve water quality, quantity, and reliability issues; field staff to read meters, respond to customer requests, operate the water and wastewater plants; laboratory costs to ensure regulating compliance; and construction crews to replace and repair pipes and facilities. Other variable costs include chemicals to treat both water and wastewater, power costs to run the treatment plants, gasoline and vehicle maintenance so we can operate in the field and the State regulatory fees (fee for the State's labor to regulate the Agency to ensure we produce clean drinking water and meet waste discharge requirements on wastewater). All of these costs, labor, chemicals, electricity, gasoline, etc. go up over time and these costs are passed through rate increases.

The Agency also has significant infrastructure that will need replacement over time. For example, the old Buckhorn Water Treatment Plant (WTP) was recently replaced due to its inability to fully meet the demand for water at peak times and also comply with drinking water regulation standards. The replacement cost of the WTP was approximately \$8.3 million. This plant serves approximately 3,500 customers in Pioneer, Mace Meadows, Pine Grove, Jackson Pines, Fairway Pines, Rabb Park, Gayla Manor, Pine Acres, Ranch House, Ridgeway Pines and Sunset Heights. The Agency was able to obtain a \$2.3 million grant to offset some of the costs, however paying the debt service for about \$6 million makes the infrastructure expensive. This is just one example of a major infrastructure need



Inside the new Buckhorn Water Treatment Plant that serves approximately 3,500 customers.

that is financed by public agencies to spread the costs out over time. Just like buying a new home with a 30 year mortgage, the Agency borrowed money to replace this old asset with new facilities.

Wastewater disposal has become very expensive everywhere in the U.S. but even more so in the rural foothill communities. First, the detection of harmful contaminants in wastewater has become so sophisticated that regulations now measure detection levels in parts per billion. They used to measure the contaminant concentrations in parts per million. This increased level of detection requires additional investments in technology and infrastructure to meet the new regulatory requirements associated with these detection levels. Secondly, wastewater treatment and disposal/recycling in the rural foothills is very expensive due to geography. Larger cities like San Francisco and Sacramento have the ability to discharge in larger rivers and receive dilution credits to help keep their rates lower. In the foothills, this higher level of treatment is required due to the lack of large rivers to discharge into and the costs are spread over a smaller customer base.

No one likes to see rate increases for basic water and wastewater service—but costs do increase over time, facilities age, technology and regulations change and assets need replacing to ensure that the Agency can meet its mission... ***“To enhance the quality of life in Amador County by providing safe reliable water and conservation services; sanitary wastewater and reclamation services. We will accomplish this as a professional team dedicated to excellent customer service, while at the same time, maintaining appropriate rates and community leadership.”***

Water...A Precious Commodity



60 drops a minute =
192 gallons down the
drain in 1 month!

Despite storms in February 2009 that dumped more than 10 feet of snow in some parts of the Sierra Nevada, the state has a long way to go to recover from a dry start to the winter—not to mention two preceding dry years. The crucial Sierra snowpack remains just 80 percent of average for the season so far.

We need to think about water as a precious commodity and water leaders today are urging Californians to make every effort to cut water consumption by 20 percent this year because of the growing likelihood of a third straight drought year.

The Amador Water Agency water rights are very senior water rights, which will provide an adequate water supply for Amador County. However, to help the State's overall drought situation, the Agency is suggesting that customers take voluntary conservation efforts.

We're asking our customers to voluntarily conserve water in the coming months. Here are a few suggestions:

- ◆ When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing. Fill one sink with wash water and the other with rinse water.
- ◆ Adjust sprinklers so only your lawn is watered and not the house, sidewalk, or street.
- ◆ Use a broom instead of a hose to clean your driveway and sidewalk and save water every time.
- ◆ Shorten your shower by a minute or two and you'll save up to 150 gallons per month.
- ◆ When cleaning out fish tanks, give the nutrient-rich water to your plants
- ◆ Use a water-efficient showerhead. They're inexpensive, easy to install, and can save you up to 750 gallons a month
- ◆ Next time you add or replace a flower or shrub, choose a low water use plant for year-round landscape color and save up to 550 gallons each year.
- ◆ Report broken pipes, open hydrants and errant sprinklers to the property owner or Water Agency.



By installing a low-flow showerhead you could save as much as 5.5 gallons a minute.

For more ways to conserve water, please visit our website.

The AWA was able to partner with Caltrans to make a long awaited project reality for Pioneer residents. When former Supervisor Richard Vinson first took office, he lobbied Caltrans for a center turn lane into the entrance of Pioneer Elementary—to provide safer access to the school and ensure that Highway 88's busy traffic continues to flow. During the planning phase it was discovered that a portion of a CAWP pipeline would have to be relocated to not only accommodate the widening, but to prevent the pipe from being buried underneath 25 feet of fill. Caltrans agreed to pay 95% of the costs associated with relocating the pipeline since the AWA had acquired easements previously. Caltrans got the green light to start the project and were working on a tight schedule. AWA crews were asked to be on standby and prepared to relocate the pipeline and tie it into an existing line at a moments notice. Agency staff was able to do so successfully finishing ahead of schedule and helping make that portion of Highway 88 a safer place.

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The raw to treated water canal conversion project seeks to replace an open earthen canal raw conveyance with a treated water pipeline to 109 households. Some customers use raw water in their homes. The State Department of Public Health invited the Agency to submit the grant application for funding a treated water pipeline in the ditch due to public health and safety concerns. **The approximate 19 miles conveyance is located in central Amador County. Installation of the pipeline will eliminate the current loss of nearly 30% of the water en route through evaporation and leakage from the canal. Health hazards will be reduced by eliminating the contamination that occurs along the canal route from septic systems, livestock and wildlife fecal effects.** Water quality will meet Federal and State regulations and provide residential customers the opportunity to be served with treated water.



The treated waterline seeks to replace an open raw conveyance to 109 households.

In addition the Agency has an application for grants and loans for the Gravity Supply Line project with the USDA RUS. In this case the Agency may get grant and loan funding to proceed with this project. The Central Amador Water Project pumps water approximately 1200 feet in elevation to the Buckhorn Water Treatment Plant from the Tiger Creek Hydroelectric Afterbay. **The electricity cost represents nearly 50% of the total annual operation and maintenance budget. The water could flow by gravity via a pipeline that would eliminate the electrical power requirement and in turn reduce greenhouse gases.** The Gravity Supply Line Project will replace the 30-year old transmission facility with a 20-inch pipeline 33,000 feet in length. The project will also include strategic placement of fire hydrants along the route that will improve capabilities of fire suppression in a corridor vulnerable to forest and grass fires.

On the Wastewater side, the Agency requested capital grant monies for the Gayla Manor Wastewater Quality Improvement Project. The Gayla Manor wastewater storage pond and collection system has been historically impacted by road system storm runoff, and surface and subsurface flows, leading to spills and overflows that discharge directly into the drainage in major storm events. **The project is to acquire a 2 acre parcel, install an additional 3,000 square-foot leach field, two 5,000-gallon dosing chambers, and loading controls to be able to dispose of wastewater year round.**

On behalf of all rate payers, the Agency actively pursues significant grant and low interest loan monies to try to keep water and wastewater rates as low as possible.

\$ The Amador Water Agency has received their first payment from PG&E for the Amador Transmission Line totaling \$305,768. PG&E had agreed to pay for benefits received for the Agency constructing the Amador Transmission Line Project. **The net present value for these payments to be received over the next 25 years is estimated to be over \$6.5 million.** This is another example of the Agency forming partnerships with other entities to try to keep water rates as reasonable as possible while replacing old infrastructure.