



WASHOE COUNTY

Integrity Communication Service

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: September 25, 2018

DATE: August 30, 2018

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Dylan Menes, S.E., P.E., Senior Engineer,
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THROUGH: Dwayne Smith, P.E., Division Director, Engineering and Capital Projects
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SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution to temporarily reduce reclaimed water use rates by fifty-percent from the August 2018 billing cycle through the end of the November 2019 irrigation season to encourage improved management practices of reclaimed water irrigation. (Commission District 2.)

SUMMARY

Washoe County Utility has undertaken an agronomic study of landscape irrigation with its reclaimed water system in order to provide continued excellent customer service. The preliminary findings of this study indicate that additional and periodic flood irrigation of reclaimed water irrigated sites may be beneficial to customer landscaping and soils.

To assist customers in better managing their irrigation needs the County is recommending a temporary fifty-percent reduction in reclaimed water rates from the August 2018 billing cycle through the end of the November 2019 irrigation season.

Strategic Objective supported by this item: Stewardship of our community.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this proposed rate reduction is to encourage improved management practices of reclaimed water irrigation in accordance with the County's preliminary agronomic study recommendations. This change in reclaimed water management is encouraged through the temporary reduction of reclaimed water rates by fifty-percent thereby removing economic barriers to any potential need for additional flood irrigation.

PREVIOUS ACTION

On July 8, 2014, the Board of County Commissioners (Board) conducted a public hearing and adopted ordinance 1535, revising the Washoe County requirements and schedule of rates and charges for reclaimed water service within Washoe County by providing options for when an applicant may choose to pay required reclaimed water connection privilege fees.

BACKGROUND

Washoe County currently provides the south Truckee Meadows high-quality tertiary treated Category A reclaimed water. Category A is a Nevada Department of

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Environmental Protection (NDEP) classification that allows for full body contact and is safely used in schools, golf courses, parks, and industrial processes for irrigation and other non-potable purposes.

Recently, Washoe County started an agronomic study of our treated effluent water supply at a major user's site to better understand how our product performs for irrigating landscaping and vegetation and to investigate any potential deleterious effects from long-term non-potable water irrigation. In summary, the early findings indicate that our reclaimed water meets and exceeds State requirements for Category A reclaimed water but also states that periodic flushing of landscaping areas that regularly use Washoe County reclaimed water may be beneficial to the soil and allows for plants to thrive.

Although long-term reclaimed water use can cause potential mineral build up in soils and plant root zones over time, flushing landscaping can remove this mineral build-up by leaching the higher concentrations of minerals away from the root zones. This leaching action occurs with reclaimed water because it has much lower concentrations of minerals than the surrounding soils.

To encourage effective management of landscape irrigation, a recommendation of temporarily reducing reclaimed water use rates by fifty-percent is being made to encourage the periodic flushing of landscaping.

FISCAL IMPACT

Reclaimed water irrigation service rates have been temporarily reduced for the billing period August 2018 through the end of the irrigation season in November 2019. The change in rates reduced Zone 1 (\$1.16 per 1,000 gallons) and Zone 2 (\$1.74 per 1,000 gallons) to \$0.58 and \$0.87, respectively.

Utilities Fund (566) earned \$1 million of reclaimed water revenue in fiscal year 2018 as recorded in cost center 664500, account 491000 (Water-Metered). A reduction in revenue is expected in fiscal years 2019 and 2020, which will likely cause overall non-depreciable reclaimed water expenses to exceed revenue. However, the exact financial impact is unknown since it is also expected that the reduction in rates will increase consumption. The Utilities Fund has sufficient cash reserves of \$6.7 million to offset the temporary deficit.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the Board of County Commissioners adopt a Resolution to temporarily reduce reclaimed water use rates by fifty-percent from the August 2018 billing cycle through the end of the November 2019 irrigation season to encourage improved management practices of reclaimed water irrigation.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with staff's recommendation, a possible motion would be: "Move to adopt a Resolution to temporarily reduce reclaimed water use rates by fifty-percent from the August 2018 billing cycle through the end of the November 2019 irrigation season to encourage improved management practices of reclaimed water irrigation."