

Here's some news about the cost of water...

The cost of water is going up. We have been talking about water and all the changes on the horizon for several years now, but like other socio/economic trends - the Graying of America, for example - we don't pay much attention until the situation is upon us or it hits us in the pocketbook.

For many years, the **Cypress Forest PUD** -- we're the folks who provide our drinking water and sewer services -- has managed to avoid passing along the increased costs of delivering drinking water and treating wastewater to our customers. Several factors have converged in recent months, however, that have made it necessary to adjust rates for water and for irrigation.

One of the changes you will notice on your water bill is the increase in the groundwater withdrawal fee charged by the North Harris County Regional Water Authority. This fee is charged to utility districts throughout the northwest area to help fund the cost of the extensive new water infrastructure necessary to make the mandated conversion to surface water that begins in 2010. During the past two years, the Authority has put more than 30 miles of new water lines in the ground to prepare for this deadline, and there are many miles left to accomplish.

The new rates, instead of encouraging water usage, will now reward households that use less water each month with lower bills. Families that use 8,000 gallons a month or less pay the minimum billing amount of \$10.00 a month. Those that use between 8,001 and 18,000 gallons a month will pay a higher rate (\$1.50/1,000 gallons); the next tier is 25,001 gallons up to 40,000 gallons (\$1.75/1,000); and the rate increases to \$2.25/1,000 gallons if usage hits 40,001 gallons. Do the math -- the more water that is used, the higher the rate per 1,000 gallons. Hopefully, this will serve as an incentive to conserve water inside the home and for lawn and garden uses.

Effective 11/1/07, the new rate for water for all H.O.A. sprinkler system usage will be \$.30/1,000 gallons pumped. With fairness in mind, the Board wants to encourage efficient use of this valuable groundwater, and will increase these rates annually until the rate approaches the true cost of water. As this cost increases, other options - such as gray water, switching to drought tolerant plants in public landscaped areas, and more efficient irrigation systems - become more cost-effective.

Water conservation is no longer a luxury...it is a necessity. The District will continue to include useful information about using this resource more efficiently on the website and in our community outreach efforts. Remember, the water we conserve today can serve us tomorrow. 💧

