

**NOTICE TO ALL PROPERTY OWNERS OF THE
CSA #41 FITCH MOUNTAIN WATER DISTRICT**

**PROPOSAL TO INCREASE WATER RATES AND
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED RATE INCREASE**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing at the following date, time, and location to consider a proposed increase in the water rates charged to the customers of the Fitch Mountain Water District and to receive protests against the proposal.

Date: October 26, 2021
Time: 1:30 p.m.
Location: Board of Supervisors Chambers
575 Administration Drive, Room 102A
Santa Rosa, California, 95403

At the hearing, all interested persons will be entitled to address the Board of Supervisors concerning the proposed rate increase.

Procedure to Protest the Proposed Water Rate Increases. Under Proposition 218, if you are the owner of record for a parcel or a tenant directly liable for payment of fees subject to the proposed rate increases, you may submit a written protest regarding the proposed rate increases. In order to be considered, written protests must be submitted in the following manner: 1) written protests must be actually received (not postmarked) by the Department of Transportation and Public Works, Attention: CSA #41 Fitch Mountain Protest, 2300 County Center Drive, Suite B100, Santa Rosa, California, 95403, by 5:00 p.m. on October 25, 2021; or 2) written protests will be accepted if hand delivered to the Clerk of the Board prior to the close of the public hearing on October 26, 2021.

Either prior to, or at the public hearing, property owners or tenants may submit written protests in respect to the proposed rates. At the public hearing, the Board will consider all written protests which have been received by the prescribed deadline. In order to be considered, a written protest must be made on the attached form. Only one protest will be counted per parcel. Only protests signed by the current owner(s) or the current tenant(s) will be allowed and must be received no later than the following deadlines:

- A property owner may submit a written protest rejecting the charge. If submitted by mail, the written protest must be received (**NOT** postmarked) by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, October 25, 2021, at the mailing address on the form.
- Alternatively, a property owner may submit his/her protest by hand delivering it. If hand delivered, a property owner may deliver his/her written protest no later than the close of the public hearing on October 26, 2021, to the Clerk of the Board at the address set forth in the above opening paragraph.

Detailed Information. The following additional information regarding the nature of the proposed rate increase is provided in accordance with Proposition 218 (Section 6 of Article XIII D of the California Constitution).

1. Background. The current monthly water rate is made up of two components: the Base Rate component and the Water Usage component. The Base Rate applies to all customers and is dependent on the size of the installed water meter; the Water Usage applies to each customer per 1,000 gallons of water consumed.

2. Proposed Increases. The proposed rate increase is only for an annual inflationary, as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), increase to the existing water rates. The annual inflationary increase will allow the system’s revenue keep up with rising operational and water system maintenance costs. If approved, rates would become effective July 1, 2022.

The following chart provides the estimated rates, which include an estimated automatic annual inflationary of 2%; however, this number is subject to annual fluctuations as published by the BLS:

CSA #41 Fitch Mountain	Current FY 21-22	Estimated 2% increase (effective 7/1/2022)	Estimated 2% increase (effective 7/1/2023)	Estimated 2% increase (effective 7/1/2024)	Estimated 2% increase (effective 7/1/2025)	Estimated 2% increase (effective 7/1/2026)
Base Rate (Meter Charge)						
5/8" meter	\$ 50.28	\$ 51.28	\$ 52.31	\$ 53.36	\$ 54.42	\$ 55.51
1" meter	\$ 117.18	\$ 119.52	\$ 121.91	\$ 124.35	\$ 126.84	\$ 129.38
1-1/2" meter	\$ 228.68	\$ 233.26	\$ 237.92	\$ 242.68	\$ 247.53	\$ 252.48
2" meter	\$ 362.49	\$ 369.74	\$ 377.13	\$ 384.67	\$ 392.37	\$ 400.21
Water Usage						
per 1,000 gallons of water consumed	\$ 13.09	\$ 13.35	\$ 13.62	\$ 13.89	\$ 14.17	\$ 14.46

3. Basis for Calculation of Rates. As required by California Water Code, Section 31007, the proposed Fitch Mountain Water District rates are set to generate sufficient revenue to pay the operating expenses and provide for repairs and depreciation of water works owned and operated by the Fitch Mountain Water District (District).

The District’s 2021-2022 budget sets out all of the District’s estimated costs (operating and capital rehabilitation and replacement). The District recently reviewed the existing fund balance and analyzed rates and costs to the system. This rate analysis concluded that the existing rate structure has provided the system with sufficient revenue for the operations and maintenance of the system, as long as rates are annually adjusted to reflect inflation.

Based on the rate analysis, the District is not changing how rates are being collected from customers. Currently, rates are collected using a monthly Base Rate (or meter charge) that increases with meter size, and single-tiered Water Usage (volumetric) rates (per 1,000 gallons). Rates will continue to charge the monthly Base Rate that increases with meter size, and customers will continue to have a “uniform tier” Water Usage rate in which the charge for each unit of water is the same.

As demonstrated by the analysis, revenues derived from the water rate do not exceed the funds required to provide the property related service. Revenues derived from the water rates will not be used for any purpose other than that for which the rate is charged. The amount of the water rate does not exceed the proportional cost of the service provided. County staff consider this to be a fair and equitable manner of collecting the costs of providing water service and providing financial stability for the District.

4. Reason for Imposing Rates. The rationale for extending the annual inflationary increase to fees is to continue providing water service to your property in compliance with State requirements while meeting rising costs for operating and maintaining the system which include providing for repairs and depreciation of the water system, unforeseen emergencies, and other lawful obligations and expenses of the Fitch Mountain Water District.

5. Backflow Prevention Devices. Those properties that have the ability to reconnect to water wells or any other unapproved water source are required to have a backflow prevention device installed and maintained in order to comply with the California Code of Regulations, Title 17 Public Health, Division 1 State Department of Health Services, Chapter 5 Sanitation (Environmental), Subchapter 1 Engineering (Sanitary) Group 4 Drinking Water, Sections 7601 to 7605. In order to maintain compliance with these regulations, the Fitch Mountain Water District ordinance will also adjust the backflow fee, currently at \$5.58 by the same annual inflationary rate as the Base Rate and Water Usage charges. This fee covers the cost of annual testing of the required backflow prevention device only. Any additional costs required for repair, maintenance, and/or replacement shall be billed directly to the customer on the monthly billing. This section only applies to those customers that are required to have backflow prevention devices.

6. Additional Information. Community Committee members of the Fitch Mountain Water District were provided an opportunity to ask questions about the current budget and proposed rates at an informational meeting on December 2, 2020.

Copies of the proposed ordinance that includes the water system rates will be filed with and available for review approximately one week before the public hearing at the Department of Transportation and Public Works, 2300 County Center Drive, Suite B100, Santa Rosa, California, 95403. Additional questions can be addressed to Adrian Diaz at the address listed above.

Dated: September 10, 2021

COUNTY OF SONOMA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS

Trish Pisenti

By: _____
Trish Pisenti
Deputy Director