



# YREKA CITY NEWSLETTER

February 28, 2009

Volume 2, Issue 2

## Important Numbers

City Hall/  
Water Division  
(530) 841-2386

Fire Department  
(530) 841-2383

Police Department  
(530) 841-2300

Public Works  
(530) 841-2370

Senior Program  
(530) 841-2365

## Elected Officials

Tom Amaral  
Mayor

Jim Griffin  
Mayor Pro Tempore

Rory McNeil  
Councilmember

David Simmen  
Councilmember

Jason Darrow  
Councilmember

Liz Casson  
City Clerk

Michael Pavlik  
City Treasurer

Dear Utility Customer:

This last year of 2008 was not an easy year for most of us. From Wall Street to Main Street to your City utility bills, we understand that every dollar is being stretched to its maximum capacity. We wanted to take this opportunity to try to respond to some of your questions and concerns regarding the recent utilities rate increase as of October 1, 2008.

The history behind the utility rate increase starts with a review that the City of Yreka conducted of its water and sewer systems that was completed by Pace Engineering in 2006. Taking a hard look at the existing systems, the studies showed that much of the system functioned well, but that large parts of the sewer and water systems are in need of repair. Our systems have been worn down with age and use. Over time, joints leak, pipes crack, equipment wears out, the ground shifts and nature takes its course.

For many years, the City deferred maintenance and kept the water and sewer rates low. This was a popular short-term strategy but not a prudent strategy for the long term. While this was happening, the City's costs of operation were escalating because of State and Federal mandates brought on by the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. We all want a cleaner environment and safe water. Stricter environmental standards are how that is achieved. This means that we need to treat our wastewater to a higher degree before we discharge it. Additionally, we are fined by the State when there is a violation, such as a sewer spill, at any location within our collection system. New filtration requirements for water treatment to our domestic water supply have also increased costs of operations.

Steps taken to address these needs include:

The City Council adopted Development Impact Fees to require new development to pay for the cost of new public improvements, including sewer & water, so as not to require the ratepayers to subsidize new growth. The City was also fortunate to secure millions of dollars in grants to help replace blocks of old sewer mains, laterals, and manholes, but there is still a lot to do. The City has been advised by several granting agencies that we would not be eligible for future grants unless we raise rates to pay for more of our own deferred maintenance. State agencies consider need as one of the main eligibility criteria in ranking grant applications. State agencies are not going to grant money for improvements to systems where the ratepayers are not making a good faith effort to fix their own problems.

We have now examined what we need to do and how much it will cost. This tells us what kind of rates we need in place to make the necessary repairs and improvements to our infrastructure. We have started implementing the rate increases to be able to borrow the millions needed to accomplish these goals. We continue to seek grant funding in order to leverage the efforts made by our ratepayers to maintain the existing investments in sewer and water facilities for the City of Yreka.

## **Your sewer rates pay for the following services:**

- Collection and treatment of wastewater from homes and businesses
- Operation and maintenance of pipes, pumps and the Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Ensuring compliance with State and Federal regulations for water and sewer systems and the Wastewater Treatment Plant, including the Clean Water Act of 1972<sup>1</sup>, Proposition 65 California Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986<sup>2</sup>, and the California Safe Drinking Water Act of 1995<sup>3</sup>

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**We're on the Web!**  
[www.ci.yreka.ca.us](http://www.ci.yreka.ca.us)

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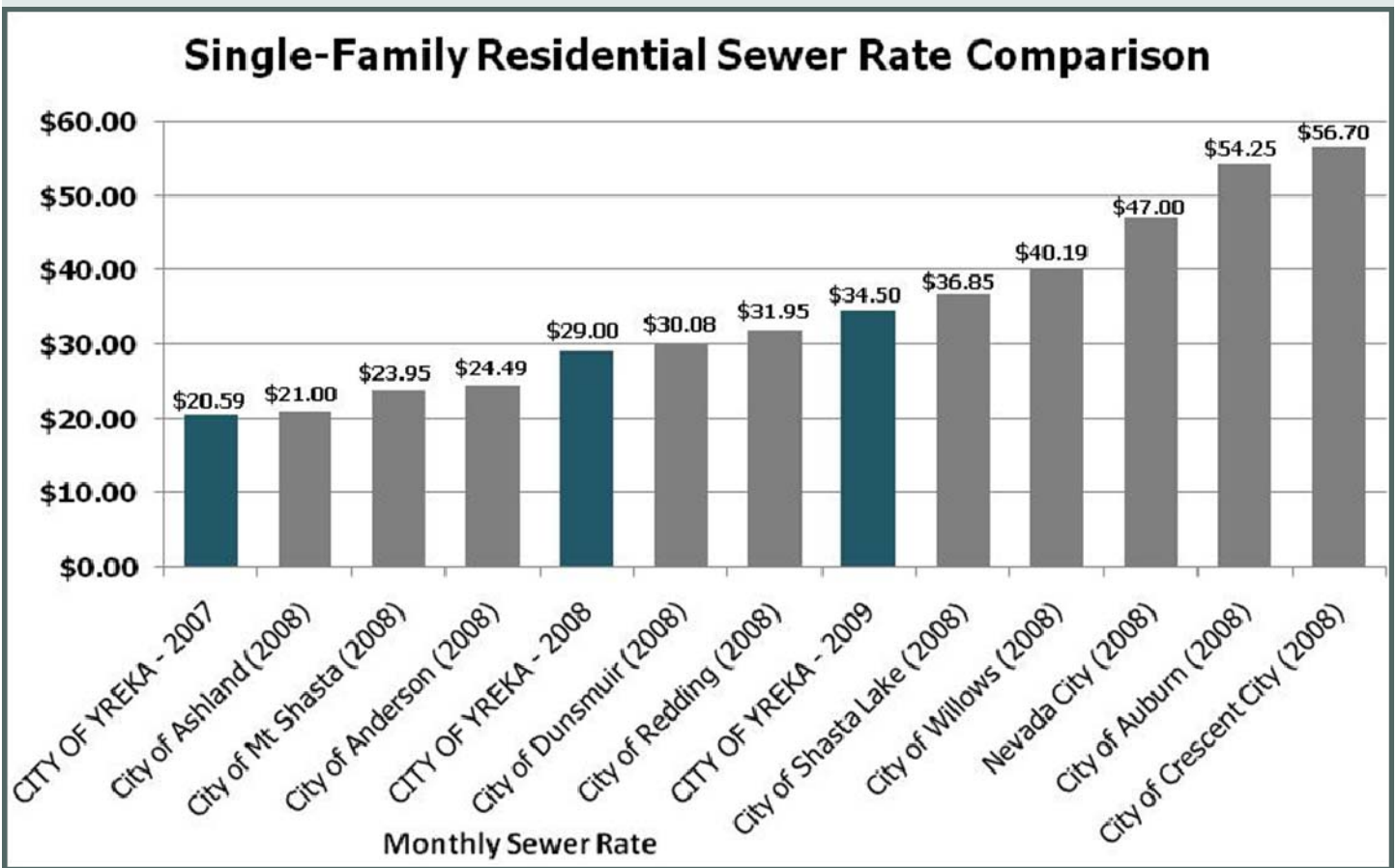
<sup>1</sup> 33 United States Code Section 1251  
<sup>2</sup> California Health and Safety Code Sections 25249.5-25249.13  
<sup>3</sup> California Health and Safety Code Section 116270  
<sup>4</sup> 33 United States Code Section 1251  
<sup>5</sup> California Health and Safety Code Sections 25249.5-25249.13  
<sup>6</sup> California Health and Safety Code Section 116270

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**Your water rates pay for the following services:**

- Maintaining the Fall Creek water supply system and the treatment, storage, and distribution systems that provide drinking water
- General water system maintenance including replacement of water mains, pumps, meters, valves, fire hydrants and other infrastructure repairs
- Increasing construction, operation and maintenance costs
- System upgrades and processes necessary to meet new State and Federal regulations, including the Clean Water Act of 1972<sup>4</sup>, Proposition 65 California Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986<sup>5</sup>, and the California Safe Drinking Water Act of 1995<sup>6</sup>

The City of Yreka is not the only city in California to be under such pressure to fund massive infrastructure repairs. From Woodland to Crescent City and beyond, cities have implemented water and sewer increases in order to account for the rising costs and necessity for infrastructure repair and compliance with stricter environmental standards. Here is a comparison of sewer rates in comparably-sized cities:



We understand the current economic state is a difficult one in which to experience increases in your water and sewer rates, but we must make these commitments to maintain the viability of these essential services for the future.

**REMINDER:** The enclosed bill reflects the annual cost of living factor of 7% for the FIRE TAX assessment. Single-family residents will see an increase of 35 cents on the monthly utility bill (reference description line FIRE TAX). Multi-family residential and commercial accounts have various FIRE TAX increases as stated by the November 2006 Ballot Measure H.