



# Beaver Brook Currents

## Lookout Mountain Water District Newsletter

### News and Facts

Fall 2002

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### The Drought... It's Real, It's Here

You may have noticed a memo at the top of your January 2002 water bill, urging all to start thinking about ways to conserve water, i.e., in view of the low snow pack and drought predictions of last winter. Well, we have given this same advice in years past, but drought never ensued.

This year, one cannot pick up a newspaper without reading something about the severe drought conditions that exist, not only in our own watershed, but over half of the continental United States. Long range forecasts of the National Weather Service show that dry conditions are likely to persist for another year or more. Roger Pielke Sr, state climatologist at Colorado State University, was quoted in the August 21, 2002 edition of the Canyon Courier as saying "...if we get an average snowpack, we're not going to come out of this drought...it would take record snowfall or better to refill reservoirs to comfortable levels."

Since we raised its dam in 1992, the District's primary reservoir storage in Upper Beaver Brook is at it's lowest ever capacity. There has been so little water in the Clear Creek system this year that our most senior water rights have been called (trumped or superseded) all summer by the few, even more senior rights of farmers and others downstream on the Platte River--requiring us to curtail storage to an extent that has not been necessary in past wet years. We have been able to satisfy some of the senior calls by emptying the Lookout Mountain

Reservoir (also know as Cedar Lake), the very purpose for which we have always stockpiled water in that lake. But, it will take conservation, careful management and lots of help from Mother Nature this winter to refill the reservoirs in preparation for another dry summer.

To encourage conservation, the District continues to urge all customers to use water with care, and for essential purposes only. Repairing leaks both in the home and outside is essential. Irrigation, except by hand or drip systems, is not allowed. The conservation incentive pricing that went in effect for the June/July billing period was very effective. Despite the dry conditions, total water use in the District was 15% less this summer than it was in the last comparably dry year of 2000.

Some customers have asked what will be done with the revenue generated from higher conservation rates. First, it will be used to offset the shortfall in revenue due to reduced water consumption. Operating expenses do not vary greatly based on how much water is treated, and these expenses must still be covered. Second, the additional revenue will be used to cover the costs that have been incurred because of the drought. For example, it was necessary for the District to utilize water rights professionals and water rights attorneys to both comply with the authorities (State of Colorado, Water Commissioner) while protecting our water rights in this difficult year. Third, if additional unexpected revenue remains after the first two expense areas are covered, the Board of

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Directors will most likely utilize the excess for special projects which will enhance storage capacity or to otherwise improve our ability to respond to water rights calls more effectively

At times like this, we realize that our natural resources cannot be taken for granted. We appreciate your efforts to conserve and ask for your continued cooperation.

## Water Rates and Billing

The water charges pay for the ongoing costs needed to bring safe water to your home or business, which includes operation, maintenance and administrative expenses. The District has a small customer base of about 500. When compared to other Districts, such as Evergreen or Golden, regular water rates may be higher, since we have a very small customer base over which these costs are distributed.

The water rates charged are not high enough to cover long-range improvements. Please see the property tax article that follows.

District customers are billed every other month for water used, based on the amount of water that flows through the customer's meter in each two-month period. Billing periods end on the 25th of January, March, May, July, September and November. Payments are due on the 20th of the month following the billing month, i.e., on the 20th of February, April, June, August, October and December. As always, please call 303-526-2025 if you have questions about your bill.

The current residential and commercial rate is \$4.87 per thousand gallons for up to 30 thousand gallons, and \$20.00 per thousand gallons for usage that exceeds 30 thousand gallons in a two-month period. The

conservation rate of \$20.00 is in effect at the time of this printing, but is subject to change, so please watch for future correspondence. The minimum bimonthly billing for residential customers is \$25.98 and applies to metered usage of 5 thousand gallons and below.

We have also updated our billing system. The result is software that meets current computer standards, to increase efficiency, and to improve customer service

## District Property Taxes

As a Jefferson County property owner, you may have noticed a line item on your annual tax statement from the County Treasurer, labeled "LMWD." In 1988, the District's property owners approved the issuance of \$2.5 million in general obligation bonds to pay for enlarging the Upper Beaver Brook Reservoir, the treatment-filtration plant, substantial new senior water rights and other system improvements. In 1993, these bonds were refunded to achieve a lower overall interest rate. To pay annual interest and retire the principal as bonds mature, the District has collected property taxes in 1989 and each succeeding year.

In the first few years, the District's levied 23 mills, but subsequently it has been possible to lower the mill rate year by year to where it now stands—at 12.532 mills for taxes collected in 2002--because of the refinancing and, also, because the District's overall assessed valuation, against which the mill levy is applied, has increased steadily since 1988. All of the bonds will be paid off in 2007, and thereafter, until there is a need for new bond financing (none foreseen now), District taxpayers will be relieved of the annual tax levy.

## Your Water District and the Board of Directors

Who is the Lookout Mountain Water District? It's made up of all the tap owners and property owners included in the District's boundaries, the Board of Directors, and the contractors and consultants who provide operation and management. It is also the rights to stored water within the reservoir in the Beaver Brook Watershed, the treatment facility, and components of the distribution system, such as the tank, pipeline, and meters.

Your Board of Directors suggests the following if you would like further involvement:

- Attend a Board Meeting
- Vote in an Election
- Run for a position on the Board of Directors
- Advocate for the preservation of the watershed
- Review LMWD Policies, Rules and Regulations
- Offer suggestions
- Come to a Budget Hearing

The Board's new Director, H.Court Young was elected in May by members of the District. Directors Richard Kunter and James Wailes were re-elected; Directors Russell Shepherd and John Roscoe continue to serve terms into 2004.

Mr. Young has been a resident of Paradise Hills for thirty-eight years and is a consultant in the computer networking and computer document management field. He is the author of "Understanding Water Rights and Conflicts" which introduces one of the most misunderstood and yet important subjects in the State of Colorado.

## **System Security, Cross-Connection Control and Wells**

We are all concerned about security these days. Let's talk about a threat to our homeland that doesn't originate with terrorists. The safety of our drinking water depends on the security of our public water system. We have invested heavily in state-of-the-art processes to ensure that the water that we deliver to your home or business is clear and pathogen-free. We must do everything we can to ensure that impurities cannot be introduced to the pipeline by any means. One way to do that is to minimize the possibility of contamination through cross-connections to the system.

A cross-connection is any mechanical means or path by which water can enter the District's system, other than through its entry point to the Main at the treatment plant. All cross-connections are strictly prohibited. The most likely cross-connect situation that we are concerned about discovering and eliminating is that where a customer

relied on a well for domestic water before hooking up to the system (when Golden owned and operated it before 1988). After obtaining a Golden tap and hooking up to the Golden system, the customer simply left the existing well system in place; perhaps leaving it isolated from household plumbing with a closed valve. The customer might continue to use the well for irrigation purposes. What is the risk of this seemingly innocuous configuration?

At times, it is possible for water to flow *backwards*, out of household plumbing and back into the District's system. The hydraulics and usage patterns of our system are complex and occasionally suction conditions can develop in a given stretch of pipeline. For example, this would likely occur if a fire engine were drawing, i.e., sucking, water from a nearby hydrant. If water flows out of a household that is concurrently supplied by a domestic well--say, a contaminated well--unsafe water could be introduced to the District's system. Through its policies, the District has tried to minimize this

possibility by requiring backflow preventers (i.e., check valves) in all new plumbing services installed since 1988. But many services pre-date 1988 and, as we noted above, these situations may exist along with an illegal cross-connection.

If you know or suspect that you have an illegal cross-connection, we ask that you do the right thing--investigate and see that it is permanently dismantled. The District does not prohibit a property being served if it also has a well, however, your well system should be completely isolated from the plumbing that is supplied by the District. Leaving plumbing in place with only a valve separating the two systems is not satisfactory or permitted. We will answer questions, explain policy, and can examine the situation and make recommendations.

## **Watershed Update--More letters needed now**

On June 26, the U.S. Forest Service purchased 2,700 acres of the Beaver Brook Watershed from the City of Golden for \$8.6 million, representing the first two annual installments of a five year agreement to purchase the entire 6,000 acre property. The 4,400 acre South Beaver Brook drainage in the Watershed is the District's primary and only source of water. About 2,500 acres of that drainage, or 57%, is now under USFS ownership and management-- permanently saved from development-- in the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest.

The President's fiscal 2003 budget included \$4 million for the third installment of the purchase from Golden. The House of Representatives included the full \$4 million in their Forest Service appropriation, but

the Senate did not. A House-Senate conference committee will meet in mid-September to negotiate a compromise appropriation. It is very important NOW that we write our Senators Allard and Campbell to urge them to push for the full \$4 million Phase 3 appropriation that the President requested. We have no doubt that your letters in the past have been vital in achieving progress to date on preservation of the Watershed. Please write today!

Sen. Wayne Allard  
525 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington , D.C. 20510

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell  
380 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

## **Privately Owned Lateral Systems and Owner Responsibilities**

Over eighty percent of the District's customers are served through privately owned, shared pipelines that are connected to the District's main pipeline. We refer to these private shared lines as "laterals". Some of the laterals are owned and managed by an organization, e.g., a homeowners association, corporation or partnership. In other instances, there is no single legal entity that owns the lateral, in which cases the District deems the lateral to be owned by the customers it serves, as tenants in common.

For a number of reasons,-- to facilitate arranging for emergency repairs, to provide for financing of repairs and improvements, to set policy for any proposed new taps on a lateral -- it is highly desirable for a lateral to be owned by a single ownership entity, formed by agreement of the District tap owners served by the lateral. If you are served by a lateral without a formal ownership organization and desire information about how to form one, contact the District for further information.

The District's 1988 Service Plan provided for the ownership and maintenance of the laterals to be a

continuing responsibility of the individual users served by the respective laterals. The District undertakes no financial or other liability for maintaining or repairing any privately owned component of its public water system. According to the District's *Policies Rules and Regulations*, Sections 5.1 and 5.2 (see [www.lookoutmountainwaterdistrict.org](http://www.lookoutmountainwaterdistrict.org)), lateral owners have these specific responsibilities:

- Protect the integrity of the public water system by maintaining the lines and their connection to the Main in good repair at all times
- Submit an annual registration report (See Article V, Sec. 5.2.1 of Policies, Rules and Regulations, available on our web site)
- Before going out for bid, obtain District approval of plans to replace or refurbish lateral lines
- Comply with prescribed procedures for reporting and repair of leaks

**We'd like to remind current Officers, Directors, and lateral representatives to submit their annual registration report (See Article V, Sec. 5.2.1 of Policies, Rules and Regulations, available on our web site) by October 30, 2002.**

