

Dave and Barbara Bennett

3881 Goldfinch Lane

Clinton, WA 98236

May 15, 2024

Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

P.O. Box 47250

Olympia, WA 98504-7250

Subject: Urgent Protest Against Cascadia Water, LLC's Proposed Rate Increase

Dear Commissioners,

We, Dave and Barbara Bennett, residents of South Whidbey Island, and customers of Cascadia Water, LLC, are writing to express our strong opposition to Cascadia Water, LLC's proposed water rate increase, which is slated for June 1, 2024. This stated "75%" proposed increase, seeking to generate an additional \$1,788,793 in revenue, follows a significant 53% rate hike in 2021, is staggering and will be crippling to our community financially.

While we understand the necessity for infrastructure investments and improvements to ensure the provision of safe and reliable water services, the notification from Cascadia Water, LLC, lacks comprehensive details on these infrastructure investments and is factually inaccurate and deceptive.

For example, the table below was part of the notification provided by Cascadia Water, indicating an increasing block rate method of billing. If you look at the base increase and the block rate increases you will see these numbers far exceed the stated "75%":

- Base rate 91%
- Block 1 rate 145%
- Block 2 rate 149%
- Block 3 rate 145%

**Island/Mainland System (for Sea View/Lehman/Del Bay)– Current Rates**

Meter Size	Base Rate (mo.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Rate	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Rate	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Rate
5/8"	\$29.35	0-500	\$2.25	501-1,000	\$3.50	Over 1,000	\$4.50
1"	\$73.38	0-1,250	\$2.25	1,251-2,500	\$3.50	Over 2,500	\$4.50
2"	\$234.80	0-4,000	\$2.25	4,001-8,000	\$3.50	Over 8,000	\$4.50
<b>Unmetered</b>	\$47.04						
<b>Ready to Serve</b>	\$29.35						

**Island/Mainland System – Proposed Rates (effective June 1, 2024)**

Meter Size <sup>1</sup>	Base Rate (mo.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	1 <sup>st</sup> Block Rate <sup>2</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Block Rate	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Size (cu. ft.)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Block Rate
5/8" or 3/4"	\$56.00	0-500	\$5.52	501-1,000	\$8.72	Over 1,000	\$11.04
1"	\$112.00	0-1,250	\$5.52	1,251-2,500	\$8.72	Over 2,500	\$11.04
2"	\$448.00	0-4,000	\$5.52	4,001-8,000	\$8.72	Over 8,000	\$11.04
<b>Unmetered<sup>3</sup></b>	\$89.60						
<b>Ready to Serve<sup>4</sup></b>	\$56.00						

To check this, I applied the new rates to our recent April billing and found that applying the proposed rates, our bi-monthly bill (for a family of two) would have increased from \$79.94 to \$178.32, a 123% increase.

I researched what other utilities are charging (using the resources referenced below) and found that based on a family of four, using 100 gal per day per person, the highest monthly rate in the nation is West Virginia at \$91 per month.

If you apply the proposed rates to the average family of four using 100 gal per day, they will be paying \$193 per month ! (or \$386 per bi-monthly).

Compare to average household energy bill in Washington of \$99.45. Water bills usually run about 2/3 of energy cost. A \$193 per month water bill significantly alters the ratio of utilities and in our opinion, is unjustified based on the information provided by Cascadia Water.

As the drier months approach, this rate structure will be particularly devastating for those depending on outdoor irrigation, such as for local food production or healthy landscaping.

We urge you to have Cascadia Water propose a reasonable fare structure, taking into account national averages of other utilities. At the very least, please delay the implementation while we gather information to adequately address this issue.

Thank you for your careful consideration on this critical issue.

Sincerely

Dave and Barb Bennett

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#### References

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/water-prices-by-state>

<https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/living/monthly-utility-costs-by-state/>

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/understanding-your-water-bill>