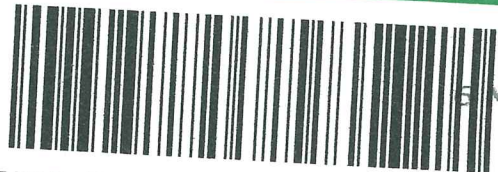


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UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
P. O. Box 47250
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Emilie (Amy) D. Fenlon
(*Bacus Hill resident*)
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May 5, 2024

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UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

621 Woodland Square Loop S.E., Lacey, Washington 98503
P. O. Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250

Regarding: Docket Number: UW-240151 Cascadia Water - request for rate increase

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the Cascadia Water Company's (further referred to as **Cascadia**) request for a rate increase for my neighborhood's water system on **Bacus Hill, Sedro Woolley, WA.**

My home is one of about fifty (50) that are served by a local, community well formerly owned by Northwest Water Services. **Cascadia** purchased that small water system, along with 4 others in the last 2 years. Note that this was a huge expansion of their corporation in a short period of time. **Cascadia** now proposes to raise our rates by 75%. **Cascadia** stated that the rate increase is "*to recover costs*". **Cascadia** listed one improvement specifically identified to Bacus Hill, and 4 other general improvements that could be attributed to Bacus Hill, though some of these are infrastructure costs that will likely provide cost savings for their company in the future. Eight (8) of the thirteen (13) improvements that **Cascadia** listed are stated to be improvements to their other water systems, and four seem to be major infrastructure improvements specific to the Island County system. Without question, **Cascadia** is asking for

me and other Bacus Hill residents to bear a heavy financial cost related to *Cascadia's* system improvements of their other purchases over the last two years.

Cascadia is also stating that they want to “**consolidate** the Northwest Water Services system (of which Bacus Hill is part) **into their Island/Mainland rate structure**”. They state that “**it will provide long-term benefits for all of its customers by developing a larger customer base.**” They stated that revising and consolidating rates will promote more efficient use of billing and spread costs evenly and more broadly across each rate structure. **That sounds like it will be a cost saving measure and improved efficiency for *Cascadia* which will lead to increased profits, but how does it benefit the Bacus Hill customer?**

Cascadia stated that they are asking for an average monthly increase of 84% for their **Island/Mainland System, of which they propose Bacus Hill will be a part.** The increase of the base rate for a 5/8" or 3/4" from \$43 to \$56 a month, may be reasonable. But the first cubic block rate, up to 500 cu ft, (dropped from 668 cu ft) is proposed to go from \$1.30 to \$5.52 per cubic ft; and the 2nd block rate of 501-10009 is going from \$2.40 to \$8.72 per cubic ft. And all of these cubic blocks are being reduced by 25%.

Bacus Hill is a rural largely 20-acre plot neighborhood on Bacus Hill consisting of forest lands and gardens sequestering carbon to help the environment. A reasonable amount of water is needed to maintain this habitat and to keep enough moisture in our grounds to deter possible wildfires which are a growing concern these days. We are not an urban neighborhood and should not expect to have water consumption similar to them. It is with great sadness that, what we consider as a basic need, “water”, has become a commodity, with an expectation of profits.

Ground water in Washington has been determined to belong to the people of Washington. A private company providing the delivery of water which the people own, should not be given the opportunity for rapid growth and profit, and expect to pass these costs on to their customers. We, as customers, have no other option to get water elsewhere in a free market- this is a monopoly on our water, and we are being held hostage to it. We cannot live without water.

I recommend that the Bacus Hill water system continue to be maintained as a separate water billing system. If the other water systems have had costly system improvements, the costs of those should be paid by each of the systems that will feel the benefits, not water systems that have needed little improvements.

We understand that rate increases are inevitable; but increases should be gradual and reasonable for customers to adjust to over an extended period of time.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Emilie D Fenlon

Dated: *May 5, 2024*

Emilie (Amy) D. Fenlon
Bacus Hill resident
Sedro Woolley Washington
425-931-1848