

July 14, 2015

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Request for coverage

Citizens Groups Concerned about SAWS Proposal to Hike Water Rates

When: Wednesday, July 15, 2015 at 11:30 a.m.

Where: SAWS Customer Service Building, 2800 U.S. Hwy 281 North

What: Citizens Groups to Address SAWS Citizens' Conservation Committee at Briefing on SAWS Water Rate Increases. A press conference will be held immediately following the briefing.

A coalition of local organizations concerned about the impact the Vista Ridge Water Supply Project will have on SAWS water rates will be attending a briefing of the SAWS Citizens Conservation Committee. The coalition calls on SAWS and the City of San Antonio to reconsider the contract with Abengoa, a Spanish consortium, to supply the most expensive water ever purchased by SAWS.

Under the new rate structure, water costs are expected to increase by 40% - 50% over the next five years. "The rate increase will fall most heavily on the backs of those who can least afford it." said Meredith McGuire, Conservation Co-Chair of the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club. "The proposed rate structure actually lowers costs to about 85% of the heaviest water users. Why should a highly profitable hotel get reductions in monthly costs while many of its employees struggle to pay their water bills?"

Members of the coalition, which includes the Alamo Group of the Sierra Club, Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, Southwest Workers Union, Texas Organizing Project, Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, the Bexar Green Party, One Body-One Earth and others are concerned about the impact these rate increases will have on low income citizens. The coalition is calling on SAWS to have a series of public hearings inviting citizens to express their views on the proposed rate increases at times and venues that encourage attendance. They hope that these hearings will be attended by SAWS Board members and City Council representatives so that they can make an informed decision on whether or not to approve a substantial increase in SAWS rates.

"The decision to approve the Vista Ridge project went through like greased lightning." said Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance director, Annalisa Peace. "There was very little discussion on how the price tag for this massive water project would impact San Antonio's low income families or whether the original, less expensive SAWS staff recommendation to rely on brackish water desalination to accommodate growth might have been the better option for our city."

The coalition meets on weekly on Wednesdays at 6:pm at Eco Centro, 1802 N. Main Ave. Concerned citizens are invited to attend and are encouraged to contact their SAWS Board representatives (board@saws.org) and their City Council representatives to voice their concerns about the water rate increases.

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