



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Public Utility Commission

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March 10, 2020



BY EMAIL

Storlie Water Company Incorporated

terrystorlie@gmail.com

RE: Advice No. 20-1

At the public meeting on March 10, 2020, the Commission adopted Staff's recommendation in this matter docketed as ADV 1091. The Staff Report and a receipted copy of the sheets in your advice filing are attached.

Nolan Moser

Chief Administrative Law Judge

Public Utility Commission of Oregon

(503) 378-3098

**PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON
STAFF REPORT
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: March 10, 2020**

REGULAR _____ CONSENT X EFFECTIVE DATE March 11, 2020

DATE: February 25, 2020

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Stephanie Yamada

THROUGH: Michael Dougherty, Bryan Conway, and Bruce Hellebuyck **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: STORLIE WATER COMPANY:
(Docket No. ADV 1091/Advice No. 20-1)
Increases the annual Central Oregon Irrigation District Habitat Fee.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) approve Storlie Water Company's (Storlie or Company) request to increase its annual Central Oregon Irrigation District (COID) Habitat Fee (Habitat Fee) from \$25 to \$75.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Commission should approve Storlie's proposal to increase its annual COID Habitat Fee from \$25 to \$75.

Applicable Law

ORS 757.205 and OAR 860-036-2000 require rate-regulated water utilities to file with the Commission schedules showing all rates, tolls, and charges pertaining to services performed by the public utility. Pursuant to ORS 757.220 and OAR 860-036-2010, water utilities must file tariff changes with the Commission at least 30 days prior to the effective date of the change.

Analysis

Storlie is a rate- and service-regulated water utility serving 19 residential customers and 18 irrigation customers in Bend, Oregon. Storlie purchases irrigation water on behalf of

its customers from COID, and this water is available from April through October annually.

Storlie's current rates were approved by the Commission with Order No. 15-409, issued December 18, 2015, in Docket No. UW 163. In that docket, the annual irrigation fees listed in Schedule No. 3 of Storlie's tariff were adjusted to reflect the actual amounts billed to Storlie by COID. At that time, the Habitat Fee was assessed by COID at an annual rate of \$25 per customer; as such, the Habitat Fee established in Schedule No. 3 of Storlie's current tariff is \$25 per year. With the present filing, Storlie proposes to increase the Habitat Fee to \$75 per year to align with the fee increase that will be implemented by COID beginning with the 2020 irrigation season.

The Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is a joint effort between the City of Prineville and the Deschutes Basin Board of Control, which is comprised of eight Deschutes Basin irrigation districts, including COID.¹ According to the COID Rate Increase FAQ Sheet, the Habitat Fee "covers the cost to develop and implement [the HCP] to protect, restore, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat throughout the Deschutes Basin."² Specifically, the HCP "will cover several species in the [Deschutes] Basin listed as 'threatened' or that are proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that may be affected by traditional and routine [irrigation] District activities."³

Storlie's proposed change was filed more than 30 days prior to the effective date, as required by applicable statutes and administrative rules. Staff has reviewed Storlie's filing and documentation of COID's planned increase to the Habitat Fee, and finds that the proposed change is reasonable.

Conclusion

The filing complies with applicable statutes and administrative rules, and should be allowed to go into effect.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve Storlie's request to increase its annual COID Habitat Fee from \$25 to \$75.

ADV 1091

¹ <http://dbbcirrigation.com/dbbc-projects/deschutes-basin-habitat-conservation-plan/>.

² Attachment A, COID Rate Increase FAQ Sheet, Page 2.

³ *Ibid.*

What are the rate increases?

- All COID patrons will see changes to assessments beginning in January 2020.
- The Habitat Conservation Plan assessment will increase by \$50 in 2020.
- The District is planning a series of rate increases over a 3-year period between 2021 and 2022.

Why are water rates increasing?

Central Oregon Irrigation District is planning annual increases between 2020 and 2022 to help pay for operation and maintenance costs and to cover the administrative costs of servicing patron accounts. The District's ability to provide reliable irrigation water depends greatly on having sufficient revenue, most of which comes from patron charges.

Hydropower has been the stable revenue source for the District since 1989. In 2007 COID began using hydropower revenue to supplement increasing operations and maintenance costs. In 2019, 40% of COID's operations and maintenance expenses were supplemented by hydropower revenue.

COID's existing hydropower contract expires in 2021 with a five-year rate reduction (in 2021 the price per kWh will decrease from \$0.12 to \$0.10 and from \$0.10 to \$0.3 in 2026). By 2026, the District is anticipating a 60% revenue loss from hydropower. The lost funds from the hydropower need to be replaced by patron assessments. The District is working to renew contracts, however, there is a need to stabilize long-term funding through increased assessments.

When will the rate increase go into effect?

The new rate schedule will become effective January 1, 2020, and every January 1 from 2020 to 2022.

How do I calculate my assessment?

Rates are calculated on Base and Habitat Conservation Plan fees and a per acre fee (operations and maintenance).

EXAMPLE:

Base Fee:	\$300.00
Operations and Maintenance*: 5 acres X \$23.00 =	\$115.00
Habitat Conservation Plan:	\$75.00
<hr/> Total Assessment:	<hr/> \$490.00

**Billed per acre. Anything under one acre is assessed at one acre. Operations and Maintenance covers repairs and cleaning of the delivery system and the distribution of water.*

How much will my irrigation assessment increase?

The Habitat Conservation Plan assessment will increase from \$25 to \$75 in 2020. Additional planned increases will occur in 2021 and 2022.

When was the last water rates increase?

Rates were last increased in 2008.

What was the process for determining the rate increase?

COID hired FCS Group, an independent consulting firm, to conduct a rate study and provide a pricing structure and plan that meets COID's long-term obligations.

How do COID's rates compare to other districts?

The Deschutes Basin is made up of eight irrigation Districts, and they all deliver water and assess their patrons differently, making an accurate comparison nearly impossible.

How is my irrigation bill calculated?

As a water rights landowner with COID, patrons do not pay for water; patrons pay for the right to use the water. Assessments are in two basic parts and are set each January by the COID Board of Directors. The assessment is not based on a quantity of water delivered, but on the costs to operate and maintain the delivery system and the District.

Your bill is based on the following:

- Base Charges covers the cost of record-keeping, scheduling, insurance, office facilities, general administration, and overhead.
- Operations and Maintenance covers repairs and cleaning of the delivery system and the distribution of water.
- Habitat Conservation Plan Fee covers the cost-share of the Habitat Conservation Plan, as well as conservation and implementation measures to improve fish and wildlife habitat in the Deschutes Basin.

What will the money be used for?

The annual basic charge and fees help pay for District operations, maintenance, and the administrative costs of servicing a patron account. The Habitat Conservation Plan fee covers the cost to develop and implement a plan to protect, restore, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat throughout the Deschutes Basin. The Habitat Conservation Plan will cover several species in the Basin listed as "threatened" or that are proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) that may be affected by traditional and routine District activities. These species include the Oregon spotted frog, reintroduced mid-Columbia River steelhead, and several others.

Is the money being used for piping projects?

No

Is there another rate increase planned?

Yes, the District is planning rate increases for 2021 and 2022 and will be looking at rates on an annual basis to assess the need.

What if I quit using irrigation water so I don't have to pay the bill?

Unfortunately, if your property has water rights, you will still be assessed for services, and you will still have to pay the bill.

What is the billing schedule?

Bills are mailed out early January and are due April 1st for the 1st half and July 1st for the 2nd half.

Who do I contact if I don't understand my bill?

Call the main office, 541-548-6047.



**SCHEDULE NO. 3
ANNUAL IRRIGATION FEES**

Available: To customers of the Utility at Bend, Oregon, and vicinity.

Applicable: To Irrigation Customers.

ANNUAL IRRIGATION BASE FEE

Annual Irrigation Base Fee	\$115.63
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ANNUAL COID O&M FEE

1 acre or less	\$23.00
Between 1 and 2 acres	\$46.00
2 or more acres	\$92.00

ANNUAL COID HABITAT FEE

Annual COID Habitat Fee	\$75.00
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Special Provisions:

1. These rates are based on continuous service. Discontinuation of service may not be employed to avoid annual service fees. See Rule No. 28, Voluntary Discontinuance.

Issue Date / Filing Date	2/5/2020	Effective for Service on or after	3/11/2020
Issued By Utility	Storlie Water Company Inc.		