



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Public Utility Commission

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February 6, 2024



BY EMAIL

Crooked River Ranch Water Company

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RE: Advice No. 24-02

At the public meeting on February 6, 2024, the Commission adopted Staff's recommendation in this matter docketed as ADV 1587. 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: February 6, 2024**

REGULAR _____ **CONSENT** X **EFFECTIVE DATE(s)** February 12 (ADV 1585)
February 16 (ADV 1587)

DATE: January 25, 2024

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Joseph Bartholomew

THROUGH: Bryan Conway and Marc Hellman **SIGNED**

SUBJECT: CROOKED RIVER RANCH:
(Docket Nos. ADV 1585/Advice No. 24-01 and ADV 1587/Advice No. 24-02)
Housekeeping Changes to Tariff Schedule Nos. 6 and 9, and Rule 21.
Charges for Trouble Call, Paper Bill & Payment by Phone, and
Corrections to Bill Service Period.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Commission approve Crooked River Ranch Water Company's Advice No 24-01 to update Tariff Schedule Nos. 6 and 9, which removes an outdated table and increase charges for trouble calls, paper billing, and payment by phone; and, Advice No 24-02 which updates the language in Rule 21 to reflect that bills are due 15 calendar days from when the bill was served.

DISCUSSION:

Issue

Whether the Public Utility Commission of Oregon (Commission) should approve Crooked River Ranch Water Company's (CRR) advice filings to make housekeeping updates to Schedule Nos. 6 and 9, which would remove an outdated table, increase charges for trouble calls, paper billing, and payment by phone; and also update Rule 21 to reflect billing due dates.

Applicable Rule or Law

Under ORS 757.205(1)-(2), a rate-regulated water utility must file schedules showing all rates, tolls, and charges for any service performed by it within the state and all rules and regulations that in any manner affect its rates.

Pursuant to ORS 757.210, the Commission may approve tariff changes if they are deemed to be fair, just, and reasonable. Tariff revisions may be made by filing revised sheets with the information required under the Commission's administrative rules, including OAR 860-036-2010.

Pursuant to ORS 757.220, filings that propose any change in rates, tolls, charges, rules, or regulations must be filed with the Commission at least 30 days before the effective date of the change.

OAR 860-036-1400(5b) states the date new charges are due at least 15 calendar days from the date the bill was served.

Analysis

Background

CRR is a rate regulated water utility serving approximately 1,678 customers in the vicinity of Terrebonne, Oregon. CRR completed rate case Docket No, UW 194, for which rates went into effect on September 20, 2023, via Order No. 23-338.

With filing Advice Filing 24-01, CRR proposes to complete housekeeping to Schedule No. 6 into its tariff. After filing its compliance tariffs in UW 194, CRR realized the table in Schedule No. 6 was no longer current. After discussions with Staff, CRR files updates to Schedule No. 6, to match the rate case outcome, and to simplify the schedule by removing the rate detail table. This change will allow CRR to ensure the schedule will stay up to date after future rate cases.

Additionally, CRR proposes to update and clarify charges in Schedule No. 9, with the following rate changes/increases:

1. Trouble-Call Charge – After normal office hours on special request. The original dollar amount was \$55 per hour, one hour minimum. CRR is proposing to change this to \$50 per hour, two-hour minimum. CRR did this because anytime a field staff leaves their house for a trouble call, CRR must pay them for two hours of overtime minimum. This will also match up with the Disconnection/Reconnect Charge after normal business hours.

2. Receive a Paper Bill – The original dollar amount was \$0.69. This amount was decided back in January of 2023, and it is already out of date. CRR is requesting to change it to an even \$0.80.
3. Payment by Phone – The original amount is \$0.95. CRR is requesting a change to \$1.00. This will make accounting easier to calculate and for the customers to understand.

Staff agrees these rates are fair, just, and reasonable due to the following reasons:

1. CRR has to pay their employees a minimum of two hours for a trouble call; this rate should be passed on to the consumer that is requesting the trouble call.
2. Pre-stamped envelope costs will be \$0.68 as of January 21, 2024,¹ and the average price of a single sheet of paper ranges from \$0.10 to \$1.50.²
3. Staff agrees with CRR that rounding the fee to pay by phone to \$1.00 will make it easier to calculate and for the customers to understand.

Staff intends to re-evaluate and true up these increases during CRR's next rate case.

With Advice filing 24-02, CRR is requesting an update to Rule 21. Updating the first paragraph to clarify that bills are due 15 calendar days from when the bill was served, removing "The date of presentation is the date on which the Utility mails the bill." This is because the current language does not meet the requirements of OAR 860-036-1400, related to when bills are considered "served."

Conclusion

Staff has determined that the requested changes are fair, just, and reasonable, and the requested updates to the CRR's tariffs are necessary and valid.

PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:

Approve Crooked River Ranch Water Company's Advice No 24-01 to update Tariff Schedule Nos. 6 and 9, which removes an outdated table and increase charges for trouble calls, paper billing, and payment by phone; and, Advice No 24-02 which updates the language in Rule 21 to reflect that bills are due 15 calendar days from when the bill was served..

¹ <https://about.usps.com/newsroom/national-releases/2023/1006-usps-proposes-new-prices-for-2024.htm>.

² [The Average Cost of Paper | Iotec Digital](#).

customer may be assessed a reasonable charge for the test if the charge is included in the Miscellaneous Service Charges Schedule. If the meter registers outside the two percent performance standard, the Utility may not charge the customer for the meter test.

BILLING

Rule 21: Billing Information and Late-Payment Charge (OAR 860-036 1100(2), 1400, and 1430)

All bills, including closing bills, are due and payable at the Utility office within at least 15 calendar days from when the bill was served, unless otherwise specified on the bill.

As near as practical, meters shall be read **(check one)** monthly, bimonthly, or quarterly on the corresponding day of each meter reading or billing period. The bill will be rendered immediately thereafter. The Utility will provide its customers with timely billings every month or as indicated in its tariffs or statement of rates.

All water service bills will show:

- A. Separate line items for past due balance, payments and credits, new charges, late fees, and total account balance;
- B. The date new charges are due;
- C. Calculation of new charges including base or flat rate, usage billing tiers and rates, beginning and ending meter readings, the dates the meter was read, rate schedule, billing period, and number of days in the billing period;
- D. The date any late payment charge was applied and an explanation of the terms of the late payment charge; and
- E. Any other information necessary for the computation of the bill.

A late-payment charge may be assessed against any account that has an unpaid balance when the next bill is being prepared. The charge will be computed on the delinquent balance owing at the time of preparing the subsequent month’s bill at the late-payment rate specified in the Miscellaneous Service Charges Schedule. The late-payment rate is determined annually by the Commission, and the Utility will be notified of the rate.

If an account is permitted to become delinquent, the Utility may disconnect water service by giving proper notice to the customer as provided in Rules 28 & 29, prior to or after the Utility assesses the late payment charge.

Issue Date / Filing Date	January 16, 2024	Effective for Service on or after	February 16, 2024
Issued By Utility	Crooked River Ranch Water Company		