

WATER RATES

Trustees Approve Minimal Increase for 2024, WDMWW Continues to Provide the **Lowest Rates** in the Metro Area

The West Des Moines Water Works Board of Trustees announced nominal changes to water rates for 2024, allowing the utility to maintain the lowest rate in the metro area.

The 3-percent change approved for 2024 adds 19 cents per thousand gallons used resulting in an increase to \$6.58 from \$6.39. The basic service charge increases 13 cents to \$4.73. For a typical household using 4,000 gallons per month this amounts to a 90-cent increase for a total monthly water bill of \$31.05 or \$32.91 including tax.

“We see water as the most basic of needs that should be affordable and reliable,” says **Scott Brennan**, chairman of the board of trustees. “This year we changed our approach to rate-setting from implementing across the board increases to varied pricing based on use. As a result, we kept our domestic water rates the lowest in the metro.”

Irrigation is the No. 1 largest use of water during peak months, which in turn drives the utility’s overall capacity needs including the contracts for purchased water from Des Moines Water Works.

Irrigation water rates will increase by 7 percent to \$8.24 per 1,000 gallons of water used. This usage is measured by separate meters used with irrigation systems and outside faucets by commercial and some residential customers.

“West Des Moines Water Works has long exercised the approach that users (and developers) who benefit pay their way,” explains **Christina Murphy**, general manager. “We employ this strategy with connection fees, and this year, the board decided to apply it to those using large amounts of water for irrigation in peak months.”

The WDMWW Board of Trustees are committed to affordable water rates, while maintaining the highest levels of safety and security for the community’s water supply.

“Water is one of the best bargains out there especially when you compare it with other essential utilities such as gas and electricity,” Murphy adds.

“In 2023, we saw a continuation of dry and drought conditions across the state, and we saw many of our customers adopt ‘Use Water Wisely’ practices,” Murphy continues. “We had more than enough water to meet the summer peak demand.”

Charges for stormwater services that appear on water bills are determined by the City of West Des Moines. The City has slated an increase for stormwater rates on July 1, 2024, to \$8.90 per equivalent residential unit (ERU), an increase of \$0.75 increase per month. Customers with more than 4,000 square feet of impervious surface area will pay a multiple of the new stormwater rate.

METRO AREA WATER RATES for 2024



RESILIENCY & SAFETY

WDMWW Trustees Approve Measure to Establish Central Iowa Water Works as Founding Members

West Des Moines Water Works trustees voted unanimously to approve conditional consideration of inclusion in the establishment of Central Iowa Water Works, a water production agency owned and governed by several metro utilities and agencies.

The vote during the public hearing on December 20 followed three months of forums and opportunities for public comment and questions, including two online meetings.

“We received a number of thoughtful questions about what changes under the CIWW model and what doesn’t,” explains Christina Murphy, general manager. “Those who attended asked questions that in general concerned three areas—among the most important was ‘who do we call?’”

The answer is and will remain West Des Moines Water Works.

In order to establish CIWW, all of the founding members must enter into a complex and comprehensive 28E/F agreement. The agreement, initially released on Feb. 22, 2022, has been through three prodigious revisions before reaching a final form.

“We have seen other attempts to regionalize water production in the metro, but none have been as well thought out and planned as CIWW,” says Scott Brennan, chairman of the WDMWW Board of Trustees. “In past iterations of regionalization, we lost local

independence, control of our destiny and financial transparency and accountability.

“The CIWW framework is just the opposite,” Brennan adds. “We continue to operate independently, but we have complete transparency on the costs of water production. Moreover, we collaborate with our neighbors when it comes to bringing on new water sources, ensuring a resilient supply and taking care of our natural resources.”

WDMWW also studied “going it alone” with a new treatment plant near Van Meter that would generate potentially as much as 12 million gallons per day



Valley Junction Public Meeting
Sept. 28, 2023

provided there was no drought. With a price tag of \$100 million and climbing, the new plant would not have been a long-term solution especially given the past four years of drought conditions across Iowa.

“CIWW goes well beyond the next 10 years,” Murphy notes. “In water planning and management, a decade is short-term, and we need to be looking further out if we are going to meet the long-term needs of our community.”

WDMWW Sampling Passes Tests for Lead and Copper

West Des Moines Water Works completed its triennial lead and copper testing in October and passed with no detection of either substance.

The testing, conducted in accordance with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Lead and Copper Rule, involved sampling water from 30

Copper sampling water homes. Most of these were built before 1986, when lead was still used in plumbing fixtures and solder for copper pipes. The samp-

ling also targets neighborhoods where lead may have been present in the service line that carries water from the main to the home.

“All of the samples from our West Des Moines homes tested negative,” reports Mitch Pinkerton, WDMWW water production manager. “More important, this testing tells us that our water is not aggressive and doesn’t erode pipes, allowing lead or copper to leach into the water.”

WDMWW’s treated water contains no lead or copper. Service lines and mains, however, in some communities may contain lead, which can be unlocked if water is corrosive.

“Copper and Lead” continued on Page 3

Communities
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Warren Rural Water

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Water Works

Xenia Rural Water

INFRASTRUCTURE

New Aquifer Storage & Recovery Well Slated for 2024

Four straight years of drought conditions across Iowa coupled with robust growth in West Des Moines presents new challenges for balancing water supply and demand. West Des Moines Water Works is fortifying its toolkit with the construction of a new aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) well to better manage peak water demand and prevent potential shortages in the future.



Construction on the 88th Street Aquifer Storage and Recovery Well will commence in the spring of 2024 and includes drilling a 2,500-foot well in Valley View Park near the existing WDMWW water tower.

A drill rig similar to that used in 2017 (shown here) for a new deep well will be employed for the ASR. It will run 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for approximately four months.

“We will fill the ASR with water otherwise not being used during winter months and withdraw up to 3 million gallons of water per day as needed during the summer peak usage months,” explains **William Mabuce**, engineering project manager.

Drilling the new well will not have any direct effect on neighboring homes and properties, though it will create noticeable noise and light during the boring process, especially for those living near the construction site.

The drilling phase requires several pieces of heavy equipment and apparatus (see left) as well as night-time lighting in order to reach the nearly half-mile depth and is expected to take up to four months with machinery running around the clock. In fact, if drilling is halted for more than a very short period of time, the Water Works runs the risk that the well hole will collapse and cause a complete failure of the project. The only way to prevent this is to drill without stopping until the 2,500-foot well depth is achieved.

“We will require the project contractor to mitigate significant noise generated during the well drilling,” Mabuce adds. “Likewise, we understand that there is no practical method to completely eliminate noise during construction.”

This is WDMWW’s first wholly owned ASR.

WDMWW Sampling Passes Tests for Lead and Copper

“Copper and Lead” from Page 2

“Our distribution system records indicate no service lines are known to contain lead,” emphasizes General Manager **Christina Murphy**.

Among the most recent revisions to the Lead and Copper Rule is the requirement for public water utilities to develop and maintain service line inventories by October 2024. This process is underway in West Des Moines and will help determine what materials are used in the utility’s service lines including galvanized steel and copper. Service lines carry water from mains to homes and businesses.

“We don’t anticipate that the recent changes regarding remediation will affect West Des Moines,” Murphy adds.

As WDMWW builds its system-wide inventory, Murphy requests assistance from customers. Use the QR code or the [link](https://www.wdmww.com/service-lines-survey.aspx) below to access the survey: www.wdmww.com/service-lines-survey.aspx

A two-minute video shows the types of materials used in water service lines (lead, galvanized steel, copper and PVC) and how to identify them.

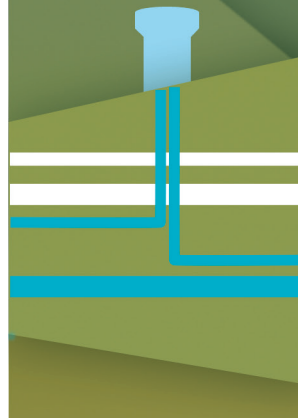
For more information on the Lead and Copper Rule, visit EPA.gov. You may also visit WDMWW.com or call the Water Works for help and information at 515-222-3510.



DID
YOU
KNOW



The Jordan Aquifer, the major source of water for West Des Moines, runs beneath most of Iowa. It is the most prominent and productive of the state’s seven aquifers.



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PEOPLE

Mitch Pinkerton Receives Harris Seidel Operators Award for Outstanding Contributions in Water Treatment

Mitch Pinkerton has worked for West Des Moines Water Works for more than 40 years, and he's one of those unassuming, almost pathologically camera-shy professionals who makes an essential difference every single day without fanfare or recognition.

Except for, that is, on Oct. 19, when he received the Harris Seidel Meritorious Operators Award from the Iowa Section of the American Water Works Association. The award goes to operators who go above and beyond in water treatment, distribution and drinking water health and safety.

"It is no exaggeration to say that Mitch learned water from the ground up," Wilson emphasizes. "His wealth of knowledge about treatment and production is simply amazing, and he can tell you almost any fact or figure about West Des Moines Water accurately and off the top of his head."

'LEARNED WATER FROM THE GROUND UP'

Pinkerton, a U.S. Marine Reserve, started with the Water Works in 1983 as a meter reader. Driven and disciplined, he quickly rose through the ranks, gaining knowledge about all facets of water production and earning professional certifications as well as

Grade 4 licenses in water treatment and distribution. He was promoted to production manager in 2010.

Murphy notes that as a result of his own career path, Pinkerton is a willing mentor and ready to help his employees grow professionally.

"People like working for Mitch," Murphy adds.

"Seven of his 10 direct reports have 20 years or more with the water production division. That kind of longevity reflects Mitch's leadership and integrity."

RESULTS OVER PRAISE

Always up for a challenge, Pinkerton and his team play a critical role in supporting the growth and expansion of the community as well as the water system. Operations include nearly 300 miles of mains in five water pressure districts, six water towers, 10 booster stations and a planned aquifer storage and recovery well for managing redundancies and preventing water outages.

"Mitch is someone that you know you can trust, personally and professionally," Wilson continues. "There's no ego or bravado; he wants results over praise, and he's always going to redirect any accolades for a job well done to his team."



Mitch Pinkerton received the Harris Seidel Award and was celebrated by three WDMWW general managers. From left: Diana Wilson, Mitch Pinkerton, Christina Murphy, and Larry Anderson, the GM who hired Pinkerton.

"This was long over due," says Christina Murphy, general manager. "Mitch contributes daily to this utility and the community with his foresight, skills and comprehensive understanding of our water system from treating raw water pumped from 21 different wells to the distribution of safe drinking water to the taps of 70,000 people. And, he manages this complex maze of supply and demand with calm and confidence."

'LONG OVER DUE'

The award was presented to Pinkerton by Murphy and two former WDMWW GMs, Larry Anderson, retired, and Diana Wilson, now general manager at Island Water Association on Sanibel Island, Fla.



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