

Palomino Lakes Water Newsletter

April 2008

Annual Meeting May 3

The Palomino Lakes Annual Meeting is scheduled for 10 AM, Saturday May 3 at the Cloverdale Veterans Memorial Hall, 205 West First Street. There are important issues to discuss and officers to elect. [Plan to attend.](#)

Fire hydrants coming...at last and very soon

With fire season fast approaching we have scheduled the installation of six new fire hydrants to replace existing "wharf" style fill points. The hydrant installation will begin on Tuesday, April 8 and will continue through the following week. This work was scheduled a year ago but had to be postponed because of the mandated water restrictions. We were concerned that a great deal of water would be lost when the mains were cut open and then again when the hydrants were tested. Now that the water restrictions have been lifted, we can get back to the project.

Bids were received from Carlisle Construction of Healdsburg, Oak Grove Construction of Santa Rosa, and Rege Construction of Cloverdale. Oak Grove Construction has been selected to do the work.

The hydrant locations were recommended by the Cloverdale Fire Protection District and are:

- Palomino at River
- Palomino at Madrone
- Palomino at Mountain Pine
- Palomino at Willow Terrace
- Mountain Pine at Willow Terrace
- Mountain Pine between Palomino and Willow Terrace

The hydrants are being installed on a "one installation a day" basis. Water interruptions will last several hours but will affect only a few houses each day. You will be given three days notice prior to your house being affected and a reminder the day before the shutdown occurs. You will also be given the expected start time and duration of your interruption.

Since our roads are not exactly freeways we request you be vigilant during the installation period and try to add a few minutes to your departure times. We will try to keep at least one lane open at all times but there may be short periods where the road is blocked entirely.

Once these installations are complete the Board will contact the organization that gathers information for the insurance companies to notify them of the upgrades. While we cannot tell you this will lower your insurance rates we have been led to believe this work is viewed very positively by the carriers.

Well status

Many of you have asked when the new well will finally become a reality especially in view of the Russian River flow cutbacks and water restrictions ordered by the State last year.



The Palomino Lakes well facility

Drilling a new well has been discussed for years for several reasons including:

- The existing 1972 well was not drilled in the best location and is not deep enough to assure an adequate water supply in the event of significantly lower river flow levels.
- The well seal, which prevents surface water and the harmful bacteria and agricultural chemicals it may contain from entering the well, is only four feet deep - far short of the current 50 foot State requirement.
- The well will complete its 36th year of service and is approaching the end of its statistical life.
- Without a back-up water source the original well cannot be refurbished because of the risk the old well could collapse leaving the community with no water source.

In May 2003, the new, incoming Board began work on a new well in earnest. By mid 2006 we had drilled test

holes and completed a hydrological analysis utilizing the data collected from the test holes. This allowed selection of two desired sites, one for the new well and a second for future development. Additionally, by late 2006, the community had set aside adequate funds to allow the project to move forward.

new potential risks in our environment and order testing for those risks.

Over the last several years, the CDPH has ordered greatly increased testing for all water agencies. Since 2003, the CDPH has added testing for arsenic, boron, lead, copper, perchlorate and radioactive isotopes to the long list of substances for which testing is required. The testing for lead and copper is particularly exhaustive as multiple tests of the water inside ten percent of the homes being served are required.

While there is no question that insuring the safety of the water we drink is vital, the costs of testing are becoming one of the major components of your water bill. In 2003 we spent less than \$2,000 on water testing; in 2008 testing costs will exceed \$5,000.

There has recently been a great deal of attention in the media to the problem of pharmaceuticals in drinking water. These pharmaceuticals enter the water from discarded prescription and over the counter drugs and from drugs which pass through human beings and eventually reach the ground water. There is currently no testing required for these compounds. Congress has scheduled hearings on the issue and it is likely that legislation will result which will require testing of all drinking water for pharmaceuticals. Again, while ensuring water safety is a very good idea, there will be very real costs.

Cross-connection redux

“Cross-connection” means a piping or physical connection between our PLMWC water distribution system and any source containing liquid, gas, or other substances not from a California Public Health Department approved water supply. Cross connection potentially allows the introduction of harmful chemical or biological agents into our water system.

Many of you will remember the problems and controversy we had a few years ago concerning cross connection. While time has quieted the controversy, the issue has not gone away and we still need to protect our water system by identifying and mitigating potential cross connections.

The Board feels that the simplest, most cost effective way to safeguard our system against cross contamination is for the water company to develop, fund and manage the cross connection program. To that end, the PLMWC has installed backflow/back pressure/back siphonage cross connection devices on twelve service connections. The installed Reverse Pressure Zone devices provide the greatest level of

Water testing

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) oversees the quality and safety of drinking water in California. The CDPH sets standards for drinking water and directs water companies such as ours to complete water testing based upon potential risks to public health. All water supplies are subject to contamination from man-made chemicals in our environment and from naturally occurring minerals and biological factors. The CDPH continues to add new water analysis requirements as the State of California and the US Environmental Protection Agency identify

protection for our water distribution system and meet all state and local requirements. All devices are tested and certified by a licensed inspector at installation and will be tested annually.



Installed reverse pressure zone device

The cost of the device, installation, and testing has been assumed by the water company. This lowers overall costs, ensures proper installation and testing and spreads the cost over the entire community.

We have developed criteria that will be used to identify properties which require the installation of a cross connection device. A device will be installed on properties that have:

- livestock or domesticated animals
- an auxiliary water supply (well, spring, Rainey collector, rainwater cisterns, grey water irrigation system, sump, surface or ground water collection systems)
- the potential of back siphonage from a pool, spa, lake or water feature

Using the above criteria, we have identified twenty-two additional properties as needing cross connection devices. These devices will be phased in over the next 18 months. Should you have questions regarding cross-connection mitigation, please contact Lee Tolbert.

Water meters & Meter boxes

You have all seen us digging around in the concrete boxes where your water meters live. So what exactly are we doing down in that concrete hole in the ground? Well, several things.

- Making sure the meter is working properly so that everyone pays for what they use. Please

understand that when a meter fails it either reads low or it stops altogether.

- Making sure there are no leaks. If a leak occurs on your side of the meter your bill will be higher and, if a leak is on the street side of the meter, everyone bears the cost.
- Cleaning out the meter box. The boxes are cool, damp areas where plants seek moisture and small critters like to live, especially as the days grow hotter and drier. We like to keep plants, ants, spiders, scorpions, wasps and soil that washes into the box under control so the meter readers are not bitten or stung and the meters are not encased in soil or roots.
- Foliage control. We recognize that many of you love your plants but when they begin to overhang or cover the meter boxes we will ask you to prune things up so box access is not compromised. If there is no action on your part you run the risk of an amateur pruning job, so please be warned.

We are on the last leg of a meter replacement program with about thirty meters still to be replaced. The State of California Public Utilities Commission wants meters recalibrated or replaced every ten years. While we are not governed by the PUC, we do try to follow their rules. Remember, healthy meters are necessary to accurately measure usage. Since there are still meters in service that were installed as long ago as 1979, some are long overdue for a change.

Finally there are the meter boxes themselves. We have raised many boxes to prevent soil or leaves from covering them and have more to rework. Additionally, several boxes will require more extensive work which may include small retaining walls to protect against soil sliding onto boxes or the boxes themselves sliding downhill.

SPECIAL NOTE - If you would like to learn how to read your meter so you can track usage, please contact a Board member. We'll be happy to help you. Knowing how to do this is very helpful in detecting leaks.

Palomino Lakes joins USA

The Palomino Lakes Mutual Water Company is now a member of the USA. You might say, "I thought we always were!"

The USA – (Underground Service Alert) provides Underground Facility Damage Prevention Service (UFDPS) to Northern California. USA's purpose is to receive planned excavation reports from the public and excavation contractors and to transmit those reports to

members of USA who have underground facilities at the location of excavation. USA members then mark or stake their facility, provide information or give clearance to dig.

All California companies with underground utilities, including our water company, are required to be a member of a UFDPS by California Government Code 4216.1:

“4216.1. Every operator of a subsurface installation, except the Department of Transportation, shall become a member of, participate in, and share in the costs of, a regional notification center.”

California law provides severe penalties for companies whose underground utilities are unmarked and subsequently damaged. Many of you will remember that a few years ago AT&T dug into our water main when installing a pole near the corner of River Road and Palomino Road. Under today's law, PLMWC would have been liable for the damage to the main and for all costs incurred by AT&T including lost time.

USA provides an important service at minimal cost. Our membership is \$150 per year.

USDA Loan

In January 1980 the water company obtained a \$279,400 loan from the Department of Agriculture to finance the installation of the current water system. We received a \$237,400 grant at the same time. The 40 year loan carries an interest rate of 5% and has a current balance \$132,707.23. Payments on the loan are \$1,357 per month with the last payment due in December 2019. Loan payments are about 15% of our annual budget and add \$39 per quarter to the water bill of every property owner.

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