

January 24, 2017



**VENTURA
RIVER
WATER DISTRICT**

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Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Affordable, Safe Drinking Water Workshop

Dear State Water Resources Control Board:

I am writing to encourage the Board to take an important step to lower water bills for low income persons immediately by about 60% (\$40/month down to \$15/per month) by prohibiting water agencies from charging a fixed base fee. Eliminating the base fee puts the customer in charge of their water bill, increases the cost per gallon and does not subsidize big water users on the backs of low income small water users.

The primary purpose of a base fee is to allow finance directors to rest easy at night because they know the revenues will be stable.

Eliminating the base fee will typically double or triple the cost per gallon of water, but it dramatically lowers the water bill for small users and increases the bills for large users.

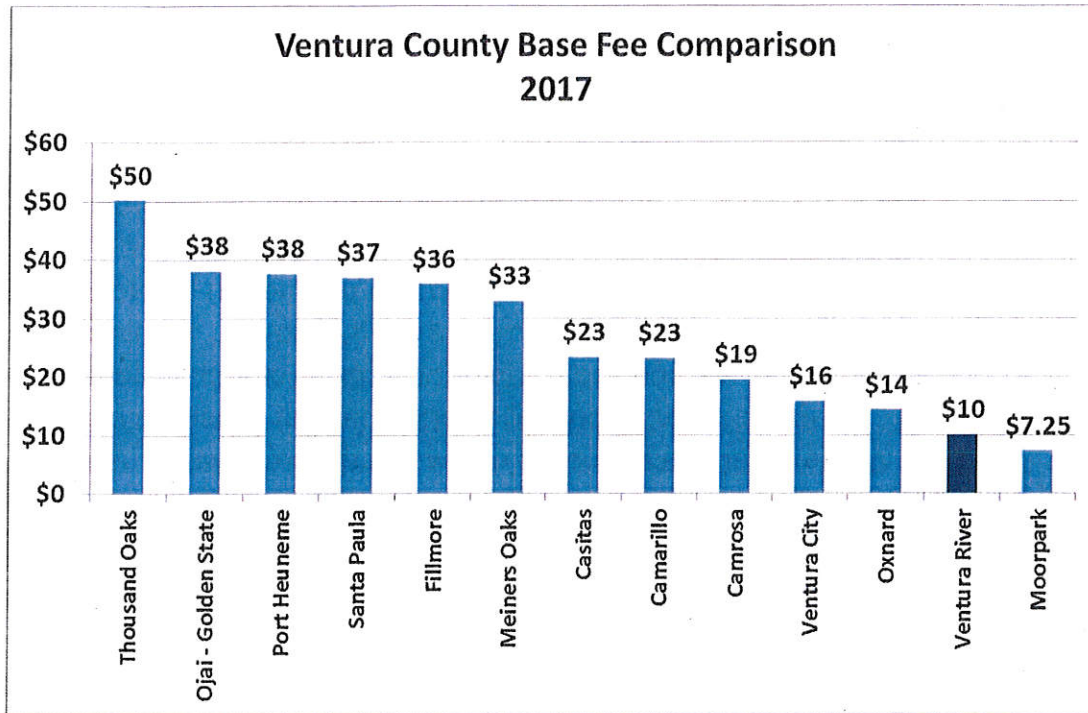
If water agencies keep a "Water Sales Fluctuation Reserve" and are willing to build the ability to adjust the cost per gallon into their 218 protest hearing process then there is no need saddle small users with a base fee and high water bill.

Eliminating the base fee is also an important water conservation measure because it sends a strong economic signal to the large water users.

None of the excuses water agencies give to justify the need for a base fee are justified. Gas stations don't charge a minimum fee to pull in and purchase a few gallons of gas

even though the oil industry has wells, pipes, tanks, pumps, treatment, overhead/administration etc. And we all need to have gas stations in or near our neighborhood for this essential service. If they can survive without a base fee so can water agencies.

Here are the base fees for 3/4" meters in Ventura County California:



About 9% of our customers use 3 units or less of water per month, many are low income households. Choosing an average base fee in Ventura County a low income small user's water bill with current rates would be about \$40/month. If all the cost was in the water, their bill would be about \$15 per month which is critical to many low income persons.

Thank you for your consideration of this concept.

Very Truly Yours
VENTURA RIVER WATER DISTRICT

Bert J. Rapp, P.E.
General Manager