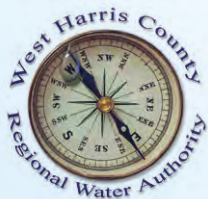




**Why is the
cost of water
going up?**

*and other important questions
about our drinking water supply...*



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BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE WHCRWA

■ In 1999, the Harris Galveston Subsidence District published its Regulatory Plan designed to arrest the occurrence of subsidence throughout northwest Harris County by requiring that the pumpage of groundwater be reduced. Such an action would also allow the aquifers to recharge.

■ To facilitate compliance with the Subsidence District's mandate, the Texas Legislature created the West Harris County Regional Water Authority to act on behalf of the municipal utility districts within its boundaries. The Authority's primary task was to adopt a **regional** approach to addressing water supply issues, and to negotiate for a long-term supply of potable surface water adequate to meet the phased conversion schedule: reduce reliance on groundwater by 30% in 2010; by 70% in 2020; and by 80% in 2030.

■ The alternative to creating an Authority was for each of the utility districts to establish their own groundwater reduction plans, and to independently secure their own future surface water supplies. Failure to do so would trigger imposition of the Subsidence District's *disincentive fee* of \$5.00 per thousand gallons of ground-water pumped — an amount that continues to greatly exceed the Authority's fee!

Q. I have sticker shock every time I open my water bill. Why does the cost of water continue to go up?

A. There are a number of factors that impact the cost of water. The West Harris County Regional Water Authority (WHCRWA) was created in 2001 by the Texas Legislature to act on behalf of the water districts within its boundaries to develop a regional approach to addressing water supply issues and to negotiate for a long-term supply of potable surface water adequate to comply with the groundwater reduction mandate of the Harris Galveston Subsidence District.

The long-term surface water contract with the City of Houston assures a competitive base price for water and the Authority's pro-rata share of transmission, operations and maintenance costs. To meet the initial reduction goal of 30 percent in 2010, the Authority had to construct an entirely new water delivery infrastructure to bring the surface water to our neighborhoods. The pumpage fees -- often shown on water bills as the WHCRWA fee -- continue to provide the funding necessary to design and construct the massive water line projects, storage and pumping facilities. During completion of the 2010 system, the Authority installed 53 miles of water lines and converted 38 districts to surface water.

In addition to ongoing construction costs, other price increasing factors included spiraling energy and chemical costs.

Q. Why is the WHCRWA fee a different amount every month?

A. The fee that appears on your water bill each month is charged to the MUDs/Well Owners within the Authority's boundaries based on the amount of water pumped by their wells or the amount of surface water they receive from WHCRWA. The Utility Districts in turn charge their individual customers for the water they use. The more water a customer uses, the higher the fee will be.



Q. How often does the Authority increase the fee?

A. There is no set time for fee increases; they are imposed only as necessary. Since 2001, the Authority's groundwater reduction fees have increased from \$.10 to \$1.75 per 1000 gallons, starting January 2012. The charge for surface water since 2005 has increased from \$.80 to \$2.15, starting January 2012.

Since the WHCRWA has no taxing authority, funding for construction projects comes from pumpage fees and water sales. It is anticipated that another half- to three-quarters of a billion dollars will be needed to pay the Authority's share in projects to meet the 2020 conversion deadline, so while there will be more rate increases in the future, the Authority is committed to keeping the price as low as possible for as long as possible.

Q. Is the WHCRWA getting any help paying for all these construction costs?

A. Revenue is also allocated to secure water supplies for 2020 forward. A critical component in this effort is the **Luce Bayou Project** which will transfer water from the Trinity River to Lake Houston to help meet increasing demand. The WHCRWA is partnering with the North Harris and Central Harris County Regional Water Authorities, the City of Houston, and the North Fort Bend Water Authority (NFBWA) in this undertaking. An additional \$42 million will come from a low interest, Water Infrastructure Fund (WIF) loan from the Texas Water Development Board to help fund a major WHCRWA/NFBWA transmission facility.

Q. If the drought continues, will it impact the cost and supply of our water?

A. While recent rains have provided some relief, the area is still dramatically behind in rainfall. According to the state's meteorologists, the drought may continue for some time. One serious consequence of the lack of rainfall has been that some water districts have been forced to drill new wells, or re-work existing wells -- a very expensive proposition -- because the water levels in the wells have dropped to the point where they are no longer producing. Low lake levels -- the source of the surface water supplies -- also impact the amount of water available. It's up to all of us to do what we can to "spend" this precious commodity wisely by using it more efficiently.



3 Top Water Savers...

1. Find and Fix Leaks -- Probably the single greatest water waster is a leaking toilet! A leak of one gallon every six minutes (not an unusual amount) totals 10 gallons an hour, or 240 gallons a day. This is almost equal to the average amount of water consumed each day in a single family home!

2. Take Shorter Showers -- If every individual in this area showered for one minute less per day, for example, the water saved would be in excess of 125 million gallons in a single year! Installing water-saving shower heads or flow restrictors can save another 500 to 800 gallons per month.

3. Water your lawn only when it needs it. Step on your grass. If it springs back when you lift your foot, it doesn't need water. After October, turn OFF your automatic sprinkler system; your lawn doesn't need watering during the dormant phase. Cutting back on unnecessary watering can save 750-1,500 gallons per month.

***The water we conserve today
can serve us tomorrow!***