

# WHWD FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

as of AUGUST 2018

## HOW MUCH IS MY WATER BILL GOING TO BE?

This amount can vary from month to month and season to season. Your bill will have a usage history on the bottom of the page. You can estimate your bill and usage using the calculator in our website [www.whwdist.com](http://www.whwdist.com). The calculator is located under the *billing* section at the main menu.

## WHAT IS THE FLAT RATE I AM PAYING?

Currently, every resident in Diablo Grande pays a \$97.57 flat rate and a small usage charge, which does not reward water conservation nor does it account for those with smaller homes which use less water than larger homes with acreage.

## WHAT SERVICES OR SYSTEMS ARE FUNDED BY MY WATER BILL?

Each month, your water bill covers District operations and pays for repairs to the existing 27-year old water system now in place. To learn more about this please visit our website at [www.whwdist.com](http://www.whwdist.com) and review all the rate study material. A capital reserve has been added to the rate structure which the District has never had before the study.

## WHAT HAPPENED AT THE LAST MEETING OF THE WESTERN HILLS BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

All approved meeting minutes of the Board as well as agendas and other information are posted at [www.whwdist.com](http://www.whwdist.com) under the *Latest Agenda and Minutes* section.

## WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY WESTERN HILLS WATER DISTRICT REGARDING THE DIFFERENT RATE STRUCTURE OPTIONS PROVIDED TO ALL RATEPAYERS?

While less than 16% of all Diablo Grand ratepayers participated in the survey, the results of the survey showed a preference for option #1 which allows a rate structure primarily based on water usage.

## WHAT IS MY APN NUMBER?

You need to contact the Stanislaus Assessor's Office to obtain your Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) which is the number the Assessor's Office has assigned your specific lot. Your APN is also on your tax bill.

## DON'T WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE THE WATER WITHIN DIABLO GRANDE FROM WESTERN HILLS WATER DISTRICT'S MARSHALL DAVIS WELL?

To obtain necessary Stanislaus County land use approvals and according to the terms of a lawsuit settlement agreement in early 2000, water from the Marshall Davis Well can only be used at Diablo Grande in the case of a catastrophic emergency, such as earthquakes and other devastating situations, which physically prevents the water from being delivered to Diablo Grande via the California Aqueduct (our only water source.) Therefore, so long as the California Aqueduct can physically carry water, water from the Marshall Davis Well cannot be used at Diablo Grande.

## ARE THE RATES INFLATED BECAUSE OF THE GOLF COURSE?

No. the golf course uses raw water that goes directly into the ponds. It does not go through the treatment plant.

## IS THE RATE RESTRUCTURE BECAUSE THE DEVELOPER DOES NOT WANT TO PAY ITS FAIR SHARE?

No. The rate study was conducted by the Northern California office of HF&H consultants – an independent consulting firm that specializes in the areas of recycling and solid waste and water/wastewater management services. HF&F reviewed all of the district's financial information and concluded that a rate restructuring was necessary to align water rates with water use, build-up capital reserves for emergency needs, and fund existing capital improvements. As part of that review process, HF&F concluded that World International had consistently paid more than its' fair share of water costs as well as it had consistently funded District shortfalls which included operational costs, facility improvements and even residential water purchases. Despite this conclusion, HF&H recommended that World International continue to pay about is pro-rata (or fair share) of costs to help fund on-going District shortfalls. Shortfall absorption of treated water and all other operating coast will continue to be 1.7 million per year.

## HOW WILL THE RATE STRUCTURE BENEFIT THE MAJORITY OF DIABLO GRANDE RESIDENTS?

The average to low water users will have the smallest change in their water bills. High volume users will have the largest increases. Please visit our website at [www.whwdist.com](http://www.whwdist.com) and review all rate study material available for more information.

## WHY IS A USE-BASE SYSTEM BETTER THAN A FLAT RATE STRUCTURE?

The independent analysis of WHWD concluded that its rate structure is not in-line with prevailing practices where rates are primarily based on usage rather than flat rate and state wide mandates to increase conservation. Please visit our website at [www.whwdist.com](http://www.whwdist.com) and review all rate study material available for more information.

## HOW WAS THE STUDY KEPT FAIR, BALANCED AND IMPARTIAL?

A resident-based committee recommended three rate study companies. This committee chose HF&H over the other two rate study companies. World International was not allowed to select the rate study firm nor have any outside influence on the study.

## DOESN'T WORD INTERNATIONAL HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO FUND THE DISTRICT?

World International reviews that annual proposed operating budget of WHWD and has the discretion to decide how much of the operating budget/losses it will fund.

## WE HEARD THAT THE RATES ARE INCREASING BECAUSE WORD INTERNATIONAL COMMITTED TO PURCHASE 8,000 ACRE FEET PER YEAR. IS THAT ACCURATE?

No, according to its June 2000 agreement with Kern County Water Agency, Western Hills Water District is contractually obligated to pay for 8,000 acre feet of surface water annually from the State Water Project (via the California Aqueduct) for the Diablo Grande Community. This contract was in-place prior to World International purchasing its Diablo Grande landholdings out of the bankruptcy court.

The June 2000 agreement between Western Hills Water District and Kern County Water Agency contains key provisions, which include the following:

- The right to 8,000 acre feet of surface water for Diablo Grande is subject to allocations and restrictions imposed by the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) on all State Water Project contractors, including Kern County Water Agency. (DWR is responsible for managing and operating the State Water Project, including the California Aqueduct.
- Surface water allocations for WHWD from DWR are based on the projected rainfall and water runoff within the State Water Project watershed.
- Typically, annual surface water allocations for Diablo Grande are initially announced in December for the coming year, with periodic adjustments made until final allocations are determined in May for the remainder of the year.
- Western Hills Water District is contractually obligated to pay all DWR-allocated costs associated with the delivery of all 8000 acre feet of surface water-even if DWR announces zero percent water deliveries to WHWD due to drought conditions.

Further, payments to DWR help cover numerous costs borne by DWR including the construction, operation and maintenance of all the reservoirs, aqueducts, pumping plants and other facilities of the State Water Project, including the California Aqueduct (the delivery system for water provided to Diablo Grande). These costs are on-going, despite times of heavy rainfall or times of drought – therefore payments from the State Water Project contractors (are made by local water districts such as Western Hills Water District) to DWR are also on-going no matter the allocations by the DWR.

## WHERE DO WE GET OUR WATER AT DIABLO GRANDE?

The community of Diablo Grande is dependent on surface water. Surface water includes water from streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands or even the ocean.

Surface water delivered to Diablo Grande originates in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Rainfall and the melting snowpack in the mountains flow into streams and rivers which ultimately make their way into the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (aka the Delta), an expansive inland river delta and estuary formed at the western edge of the Central Valley. From the Delta, water is conveyed throughout areas of California via a statewide water delivery system of canals, tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts, including the California Aqueduct.

It should be noted that lack of water during times of drought (combined with environmental programs to protect the salmon, Delta smelt and longfin smelt, reduce the pumping of water out of the Delta and into the California Aqueduct.

The water for Diablo Grande is provided from the California Aqueduct via a metered turnout located near the corner of Lower Oak Flat Road and Interstate 5. Raw water for the community is pumped uphill through a series of four raw water pump stations. From the last raw water pump station, water can either be routed to the Diablo Grande Water Treatment Plant or sent to the golf course.

Raw water for irrigation of the golf course at Diablo Grande is put into ponds and then pumped out and into the golf course irrigation system. Water intended for residential use and maintenance of common area landscaping (including parks and front yards in some residential neighborhoods) is potable water (or water treated to drinking water standards) and is distributed to the Diablo Grande community on an “as needed” basis. Water from the Diablo Grande Water Treatment Plant is stored in a 1 million gallon storage tank located on a hill above the existing neighborhoods of Diablo Grande. Water flows downhill from this tank to the community.