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W-03512A-03-0279

ORIGINAL

ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION

UTILITY COMPLAINT FORM

RECEIVED

Investigator: Joan Ruf

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2003 SEP 18 A 8:13

Priority: Respond Within Five Days

Opinion No. 2003 - 28962

Date: 9/18/2003

AZ CORP COMMISSION DOCUMENT CONTROL

Complaint Description: 08D Rate Case Items - Hearing/PC Meeting

First:

Last:

Complaint By: Tani & Jerry

LeClair

Account Name: Tani & Jerry LeClair

Home (000) 000-0000

Street: 147 Ben Boulevard

Work: (000) 000-0000

City: Pine

Arizona Corporation Commission

CBR:

State: AZ Zip: 85544

DOCKETED

is:

Utility Company: Pine Water Co., Inc. SEP 18 2003

W-03512A-03-0279

Division: Cool Pines

DOCKETED BY

Contact Name: Mistie Jared

Contact Phone: (661) 633-7546

Nature of Complaint:

Dear Corporation Commission Members:

We were recently notified that Pine Water Company has applied to the Commission for an increase of 41% in allowable revenues as well as the authority to incur long term indebtedness in the amount of \$178,000. We must object to that proposal and request that the Commission hold a meeting for public comment in Pine before the October 15, 2003 deadline for public participation.

We attended a meeting in Pine, hosted by the Commission, about a year ago. You might recall that Pine area residents had been on severe water restriction for several months and many area residents had been without water for as long as two weeks. After a great deal of testimony and public comment, most of which was very negative toward the Pine Water Company, we were assured by the Commission of several things: 1) There would be no more extended periods without water for area residents, 2) every effort would be made to reduce the impact and frequency of future water use restrictions, 3) efforts would be made to locate and capitalize on new, reliable sources of water, and 4) the communities of Pine and Strawberry would be treated equally when it came to the distribution of existing water supplies.

Sadly, not much progress has been made in any of these areas during the past year. Pine area residents have been under severe water restrictions all summer. Only in the last couple of weeks have those restrictions eased.

Earlier this summer we were told that the Commission, on May 13, 2003, authorized Pine Water Company to charge additional fees to cover the cost of hauling water when it became necessary to augment supplies. The most obvious question is, what happened to the water line built between Strawberry and Pine last year to eliminate the need to haul water? Is that line in use at this time? To our knowledge Strawberry has had no restrictions on water usage all year.

We object, as well, to the amount of tariff that the Commission has authorized as well as the broad, yet arbitrary, enforcement power granted to Pine Water Company. As an example of this new tariff, we were billed

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\$16.70 for water usage for the month of August and yet, with our "water augmentation charge" and "3/4 inch minimum charge," our bill totaled \$92.39. Is that the sort of rate structure the Commission had in mind when it granted these tariffs in May? We consider it outrageous. It is opportunistic and heavy-handed.

Finally, we have also learned that the Commission and Gila County have authorized twenty-five additional water hook-ups per month in the affected area. Does that not strike anyone on the Commission or its staff as irresponsible? We ask you: why would anyone or any group with any degree of good judgment choose to make a crisis situation even worse by allowing additional strain on a water system already so inadequate?

Unfortunately, the Arizona Corporation Commission is the only protection the residents of our area have when it comes to water issues. Our future depends on you. Please reverse your May decision and do not award rate increases in any amount for Pine Water Company as long as current circumstances exist. We would appreciate your comment on these issues as well as your assurances that a meeting for public comment will be held in Pine, before the October, 15, deadline.

Regards,

Jerry & Tani LeClair  
147 Ben Blvd.  
Pine, AZ 85544

### Utilities' Response:

N/A

### Investigator's Comments and Disposition:

Good morning. Thank you for taking the time to write and voice your concerns on the Pine Water Company pending rate increase. Your comments will be placed in the official docket file W-03512A-03-0279 and will become part of the rate case.

Based on the information I received from the Commission's Public Information Officer, a public comment meeting is scheduled for December 8, 2003 at 6:00 p.m. in Pine, Arizona. At this time, the location of the meeting has not been determine. Staff is hoping that the Pine Elementary School will allow the Commission to use their gymnasium to accommodate the customers in Pine.

Date Completed: 9/18/2003

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