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FOR RELEASE

Helix Water District Board Approves Rate Adjustments Designed to Ensure System Reliability

Helix Water District Board of Directors approved water rates and service charges for fiscal years 2021-22 and 2022-23 on Wednesday, April 28, 2021. These rates and charges were based on recommendations made by an independent rate consultant.

The consultant determined that the adjustments were necessary for the continued safe and reliable delivery of water to the Helix service area in response to rising operating costs, capital replacement expenses and the need to meet required financial reserves.

“The rate adjustments are important for maintaining current service levels and completing critical infrastructure and maintenance projects such as pipeline and pump station upgrades and replacements that keep our delivery system running smoothly and efficiently for the 277,000 people we serve,” Helix Water District General Manager Carlos Lugo said.

The board passed the new water rates and service charges following a public hearing conducted virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings. The rates take effect on May 1 of 2021 and 2022.

The public hearing and subsequent vote followed a year of financial analysis and cost-cutting measures by the district, including using \$5 million from its rate stabilization fund, deferring \$3 million in planned pre-payments to the California Public Employees’ Retirement System and deferring \$2 million in planned investment in the district’s infrastructure.

Board of Directors

Joel A. Scalzitti, President
Kathleen Coates Hedberg, Vice President
Daniel H. McMillan, Division 1
DeAna R. Verbeke, Division 2
Mark Gracyk, Division 3

Additionally, in 2020, the Helix Water District board approved a zero rate increase and froze late payment fees and shutoffs for nonpayment in the wake of widespread job losses. On February 24, 2021, the board approved the Helix Helps Customer Assistance Program, which began on April 5 and offers a one-time credit of up to \$300 for Helix single-family residential customers who are behind on their water bills and can document that they have been financially impacted by the pandemic.

Prior to the April 28 public hearing, the district sought to educate customers about the proposed changes through extensive outreach and a community meeting. Additional information was provided on the district's website, HWD.com/rates, along with a bill estimator tool to help customers determine how the new rates would impact them, and details on the Helix Helps Customer Assistance Program for customers who have been affected by COVID-19 and have outstanding bills.

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About Helix Water District

Helix Water District delivers a safe and reliable water supply to 277,000 people in the cities of La Mesa, Lemon Grove and El Cajon, the Spring Valley and Lakeside communities, and unincorporated areas of eastern San Diego County. The District's R.M. Levy Water Treatment Plant in Lakeside is a regional facility serving more than 500,000 east county residents in the Helix, Otay, Padre Dam Municipal and Lakeside water districts.