



From time to time, I think it is important to refresh all of our perceptions about what USCDWUA - your water company - is here for. Really, the name says it all: we are a domestic water provider. The trouble is, there are a number of interpretations applied to "domestic". Is it strictly cooking, drinking, bathing and laundry? Does it include washing the car, the dog, and watering a horse? A herd of horses? Is it domestic use to keep a hundred square feet of lawn nice and green? How about a half acre of lawn? Obviously, different people have different expectations.

Our limitations become more apparent if we remember that we are a **rural** domestic water company. There are several factors that distinguish us from a municipal system:

**Tap density** - the number of taps per mile of pipeline is much smaller in a rural system. On parts of our system, there are only four or five taps per mile of pipeline. In town, there will be over ten times as many. This means a rural system generates less revenue to build and maintain itself. It also means a lot of empty space that can suddenly become occupied, and cause the company to scramble to keep up.

**Funding** - our association, like many other rural water companies, is entirely self-supporting. We have no taxing authority. In fact, we pay sales taxes, unlike a municipality. If we fall short of our financial requirements, we would have to seek loans or grants, which are nearly non-existent because we are not a governmental body or special district. The Board of Directors and management have always worked to stay within our means.

**Obligations** - a city water system must supply many different needs. There may be hotels, restaurants, and industry requiring lots of water. There might be no other means of irrigation, so if a town wants to look green, the domestic water must be used on yards and city parks. A town must also supply fire fighting water, with plenty of hydrants and large main lines to feed them.

Of course, as population increases, a rural system begins to look more like a city system. People who have moved from the city expect much the same water service they had before. Of course, it is required to taste better than big city water, but otherwise be available in the same quantities and for the same price.

A difficult issue is fire fighting water. The pipelines in our system often will not provide the water flow that fire departments desire. Fire districts in Delta County often recommend a flow of 1000 gallons per minute for new subdivisions in high fire danger areas. That is enough water to supply more than 2000 domestic taps at the rate our members use water. Our Association is still years away from needing such capacity for purely domestic use. Having large pipelines degrades water quality because of the extra time it takes for the water to reach you. Yet, we must recognize the increased demand the future will place on both domestic and fire supplies, and we are building larger pipelines whenever possible.

Meanwhile, we will provide whatever fire suppression water is available. Our policy is to provide and install a fire hydrant whenever a development, an individual, or neighborhood group agrees to pay for it. Ideally, the hydrant should be connected to a pipeline of six inches in diameter, but many hydrants are served by smaller lines. Most firemen agree that some water is better than none at all.

Except in rare instances of water shortage, your association does not attempt to control how you use your water, except through the pocketbook. The present rate schedule has been in use for many years, and has proven to be effective at curtailing extravagant consumption for whatever purpose. It's the best method of defining "domestic" that we can come up with.