



## UP THE CREEK June 1, 2010

Last month's newsletter seemed to be well received, at least by sickos who like pictures of Black Widow spiders, but it left some customers wanting a little more info. So this month we are happy to fan the flame of misunderstanding by offering this meter reading FAQ:

**Q:** On the back of this page it talks about dates for different meter reading cycles. What's a cycle, and what does it mean to me?

**A:** You wouldn't suspect it, but we do try to be orderly in our job of reading meters. Instead of treating the entire territory as one big block to be read in whatever random order, we have broken it down into smaller blocks of around 200 meters each, a size that can typically be read in two days. We always read in the same order, starting with cycle 1 and finishing with cycle 5.

**Q:** How can I tell what cycle am I in?

**A:** They are geographic areas: **Cycle 1** is all of Redlands Mesa. **Cycle 2** is Cedar Mesa south of Cactus Park Road, including Dry Creek. **Cycle 3** is Cedar Mesa north from Cactus Park Road. **Cycle 4** is Panorama Heights, and the Surface Creek Valley south of Tabor/Tannin Road. **Cycle 5** is from Tabor/Tannin Road north. There are a few homes that don't fit precisely in these descriptions. You can find the dates your meter was read on your water bill, in the lower left corner.

**Q:** I see that I'm in cycle 1. My meter might be read on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, or 20<sup>th</sup>. This could result in unequal lengths of the "month" that I'm being billed for. Is this fair?

**A:** Well, it's fair to our employees, who don't want to work weekends to comply with an "equal length" principle. That's one reason the published cycle dates are flexible. Anyway, the number of days between April 18<sup>th</sup> and May 18<sup>th</sup> is not the same as between May 18<sup>th</sup> and June 18<sup>th</sup>, right?

**Q:** True, but that's only one day difference. What about variations of three or four days? I've seen that happen, and I'm suspicious that it causes a distorted water bill.

**A:** You are right, such variations can happen. Let's say your meter was read on May 19<sup>th</sup>. The same day in June falls on Saturday. We would normally read your meter the following Monday, but it will be raining – assured because the farmers will all have their hay down – and our employees, being allergic to water in any form, will refrain from reading meters that day. And maybe the next day also, to let the mud dry (company motto: never kneel in mud). So, we're three days out of synch. Next day, there's a big pipeline emergency, and we can't read it that day cuz we're like awful busy, you see.

**Q:** Okay, I feel for your overworked employees, but what about me? I will naturally use more water in, say, 34 days than in an actual month. What if it bumps me into a more expensive region of your escalating rate structure, forcing me to get a bank loan to pay my bill?

**A:** Here's how our billing software protects you from a "long month". (1) The gallons used is divided by the number of days to obtain the daily average usage. (2) The daily average is multiplied by 30.5 to normalize it to a "month." (3) This normalized number is considered to be your usage for the month, and is fed into the rate chart shown on the back of this page to calculate your bill.

**Q:** But what about a short month? If the days between readings is like 28, and you multiply my daily use by 30.5, doesn't that method unfairly charge me for water I did not use?

**A:** No, in that case, you are simply charged for what went through the meter. No hocus-pocus.

**Q:** How did you come up with 30.5 days to represent a "month?"

**A:** That's the average length of the months in our meter reading season.

**Q:** I give up, you've got all the answers.

**A:** Yep, that's what a FAQ is for!