

## **Apple Valley water consumers**

A word of caution for residents of Apple Valley — look before you leap.

In 1989 folks up in the Big Bear area felt they were being ripped off by their water utility so they decided to buy the water company and run it themselves.

In 1997 we bought our little “cabin in the woods” served by the Department of Water, City of Big Bear Lake.

There’s a pie chart on the back of our bill that explains “Where Your Payment Goes.” Mind you, this part of the bill is completely separate from the rates you pay for the water you actually use. Before we draw even one glass of water to drink, here is where our money goes: 52 percent, operation and maintenance expenses; 2 percent, equipment; 9 percent, water system improvements; 6 percent, loan payment for system improvements; and 31 percent, loan payment for 1989 system acquisition. We are on a bi-monthly billing cycle and our water usage on our latest cycle (Jan. 6 through March 9) was zero.

Our bill was \$85.94. That’s \$42.97 per month just to have the privilege of having running water available at the tap, and does not include what you have to pay for the water you actually do use. The city went into debt to buy the water company, and 26 years later we, the consumers, are still paying for it.

Because Public Utility Commissions are not allowed to regulate utilities into bankruptcy, it doesn’t matter if the water company is owned and operated by a private entity or by a public entity such as a city. They will always be guaranteed not to fail. In either case, the consumer always pays. It makes it hard for a consumer to make an informed choice.

— *Gabriel Portillo Hesperia*

Letter to the Editor published in the March 19, 2015 issue of *The Daily Press*