

Town wasting water

The Town of Apple Valley wants you to believe that their ownership of Apple Valley Ranchos is more necessary because they are so concerned about your water rates, but they actually don't care about your water rates and their recent behavior toward water conservation proves that.

Some readers might remember that I had to file public records requests to find out how much water the town uses and whether or not they were in compliance with Gov. Brown's water reduction mandates. The baseline established by the governor was for usage within the 2013 water year. The town cynically reported that they had reduced water usage at a Council meeting this summer and were in compliance but the invoices from Ranchos that I obtained as a result of my records request proved that they weren't conserving when the rest of us were. The town paid drought surcharges on nearly every account they have.

The town had huge drought surcharges at the golf course as high as \$9,300 for one billing cycle. So what, Ranchos was gouging everybody is what I've heard many say. But it is important that the public remember that Ranchos as the water purveyor must hit the 28 percent water reduction total established by Gov. Brown and that means the largest water user (the town) needed to dramatically cut its usage from 2013 levels.

The Town Council sat in front of the public for months and pandered to those who complained about the drought surcharges Ranchos was charging, while they as the largest water user and representing the largest percentage of units consumed, actually drove down the number of units available to Ranchos customers and increased the likelihood of our getting surcharges. It was a sure recipe to infuriate Apple Valley ratepayers. Ranchos couldn't get the town to reduce its water usage to allocate more units because the town simply didn't care. You pay their water bill, not them and Ranchos couldn't reveal how much water the town uses... but I can and have.

I compared town water usage during months of 2013 with the same months and time period in 2015. Nearly every account had increased water usage, but Assistant Town Managers Marc Puckett and Dennis Cron used very high water usage rates from 2014 to claim percentage water reductions, which were notated on many of the Ranchos invoices. Dishonest? Standard operating procedure in the Town of Apple Valley. If the town really cared about its citizens and had aggressively cut its water usage, you would have been entitled to more units of water without drought surcharges because the total amount available would have increased post Ranchos computation of available units. if anyone doubts the information, look for yourselves and file your own records request.

— *David Mueller, Apple Valley*

Letter to the Editor published in the Nov. 29, 2015 issue of *The Daily Press*