



UP THE CREEK

June 1, 2012

As you may see by glancing at the reverse side of this page, we will soon experience the summer solstice. This is technically defined as the time when the north half of the globe is most directly pointed at the Sun. The word is from *sol*, Latin for sun, and *sistere*, “cause to stand,” so that for the precise instant of solstice, the sun stops at the end of its northern excursion before heading back south. We also know it as the start of summer, but we should mark it as the start of winter, because the days immediately begin to shorten. The start of summer should really be marked on December 21, when the days begin to lengthen. No matter, we can tell the arrival of summer without a calendar or special cosmological training – just stand outside bareheaded for a few minutes on a clear day. The brain, as it begins to boil, plants a message in the ear, “Go inside and drink iced tea.” That's summer.

Summer may also be recognized by the arrival of high water bills. We've already sent a few of these for the month of May, a sign that summer is well under way. We all have an urge to make up for the lack of natural precipitation by applying a liberal amount of hose-fed precipitation. All we can say is, watch out. Don't let your brain boil and leave a hose running nonstop for three weeks, it's expensive. Notice on the flip side of this sheet those gray shapes – the circle, the diamond, and the square. Your water tap is assigned one of these shapes. You will find it on your bill, in the form of a picture if you get e-bills, or as a printed word on paper bills. We want you to water on your shape day, and not on other shape days. There are two reasons. It reduces the chance of a very painful water bill and it evens out the demand on our distribution system, avoiding the scenario of twenty houses on the same branch of pipeline sucking it dry by simultaneously irrigating.

People who have been shocked by a nasty water bill often have a hard time believing that they could have used so much water. “It's physically impossible,” is often heard. Consider an example: a hose can easily run five gallons per minute which, if left on continuously, is 7,200 gallons per day, or 216,000 gallons per month. The cost for such an oops is \$1,816.00.

If you want a green summer, but not a broke summer, there are two things you should know about. One is the rate chart on the back of this page. The second is your water meter. You should find out where it is and how to read it. We will be glad to help. It is easier for us to show you how to read a water meter and estimate your accumulating bill than it is to justify reducing a whopping bill that came about for no other reason than your boiled brain, although we do have sympathy for that condition.

In June, we will conduct our annual lead and copper sampling. Ten of you lucky customers will be asked to donate a specimen (of tap water!) in the jug we furnish, and leave it for us to pick up. Lead and copper sampling is unique in drinking water testing because the sample is collected by the customer, not by the water system operators. This is because the sample must represent the first draw of water from pipes that have been still for six hours. Only a resident of the household can make that judgment. The reason for the “first draw” is the presumption that water standing in copper plumbing with lead-soldered joints may dissolve some of the metal. In the past, we have seen some slightly over-zealous reasoning, “If six hours is a good test, how about six days? Or better yet, that faucet out back hasn't run water in six months. I'll use that one.” No, sorry, the tap has to be one that is used daily by people for drinking. No point in alarming the State and Feds unnecessarily.

Thank you to those who participate in this annual sampling. You were selected on the basis of your home's plumbing material and when it was installed or repaired. You didn't volunteer, but you have done this necessary job with good humor and diligence. We appreciate it.