

Information presented to the Commission during
 the Feb. 15, 2012 LAFCO hearing.

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

To: LAFCO, County of San Bernardino
 Fr: Michael Lipsitz, Ratepayer, County Service Area 70 W-1

**Re: Petition for inclusion in the
 Bighorn-Desert View Water Agency Sphere of Influence**

With all due respect, I am writing to express my disappointment that LAFCO did not follow planner recommendations for the expansion of the Bighorn-Desert View Water Agency Sphere of Influence to include portions of CSA 70 W-1 where I own two parcels residing on one. In addition, I speak for myself and on behalf of a sizable number of neighbors in expressing frustration with the choice of San Bernardino as the location for public hearings on our community nearly 100 miles away. Not only is notice of such hearings insufficient, the great distance from our community presents a formidable barrier for those of us wishing to offer relevant testimony.

Be that as it may, I request that this petition be entered into the record for consideration when the Water Agency's Sphere of Influence is again taken up for consideration. Since locating to this area in 2004 I have seen the very good service received by ratepayers of Bighorn-Desert View whose SOI ends at my property line along Yucca Mesa Road. In that time, I have also become aware of the lower, more favorable water rates paid by their customers who have the added advantage of being served by an agency with an office and personnel in this community while I am served by Special Districts with an office 60 miles away in Victorville.

Bighorn customers have the advantage of a dedicated staff and leak detection technology, while my only interaction with CSA occurred several years ago when I noticed a backhoe rumbling across my property. They'd come to repair a leak on their side of the meter, but not before my bill reached approximately \$1,600! Never did the CSA office attempt to contact us as the water ran unchecked but well out of sight of my residence. I appealed for consideration with that bill, but received none.

Coincidentally, an experience just today illustrates well the difference in customer service expectations between Bighorn-Desert View ratepayers and those of us relegated to the CSA 70 W-1. As I drove up Yucca Mesa Road toward Reche Road this morning, I passed a home where a broken pipe had water gushing out, flooding the road. Instinctively I grabbed the phone book I keep in my truck and called Bighorn. (It did not occur to me to look up the CSA 70 W-1 in the phone book, but if it had, I wouldn't have known where to start. Would you?)

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LAFCO
 San Bernardino County

As it turned out, the address with the leak was on the part of Yucca Mesa Road served by CSA 70 W-1 and not Bighorn. That distinction did not matter to Bighorn-Desert View Director Judy Corl-Irono who, after learning of the situation, was somehow able to locate a cell number for the property owner. Later in the day I passed by the property and called out to the owner who said he'd rushed home after receiving the phone call and was able to shut off the water at the meter.

We chatted for a minute about the differences between Bighorn-Desert View and CSA 70 W-1. He wondered how CSA 70 W-1 might have handled the situation and I told him he probably wouldn't have learned about the leak until a backhoe arrived from Victorville to fix their side of the meter! And had Bighorn not been there to take my call, I suppose I would have had to send a letter to the CSA 70 W-1 post office address to let them know of the emergency. LAFCO can't possibly believe that CSA 70 W-1 able to better serve the interest of those left out of Bighorn's SOI in this rural part of the county.

As another example, I offer the case of an exposed water main on Lutz Road a few miles from my property. It has been exposed for a number of weeks leaving all properties on my side of the main vulnerable to a service interruption when a vehicle finally breaks it or it freezes. I challenge you to find such sloppy, unfinished work on the Bighorn side of the dividing line.

The residents in this portion of CSA 70m W-1 want to know if there is an explanation for deviating from planner recommendations? Why is a seemingly arbitrary portion of our community barred from access to the favorable rates and superior service of Bighorn-Desert View when they are located here, easily accessible and responsive to the needs of those within their SOI (and sometimes outside of it as evidenced by this morning's experience)?

When the matter of Bighorn-Desert View's SOI again comes up for review, we strongly encourage LAFCO to make an effort to notify those of us in the affected service areas of the hearing, consider holding the hearing in an area more accessible to this community and, above all, please expand the Agency's SOI to include those of us in CSA70 W-1 wishing to take advantage of the benefits enjoyed by their ratepayers across the road.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration,



MICHAEL LIPSITZ