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Petition to PUC Commission

IDAHO PUBLIC
UTILITIES COMMISSION

To: Jean Jewell
Secretary of the Commission
RE: Water Rate Increase Request by
Spirit Lake East Water Company
Ref: Case # SPL-W-06-1

Please know that all signatures contained herein are residents of Spirit Lake East and Treeport subdivisions and are consumers of Spirit Lake East Water Company. This petition is designed to address both the current request for a rate increase by Spirit Lake East Water Company and complaints regarding the management and maintenance of the current water system as well as issues pertaining to past years.

Our issues and complaints are as follows:

1. SLE Water has not reported on water outages to the PUC or DEQ as is required by State regulatory standards. E-coli is a definite danger to consumers when the pressure drops below 20 psi and requires that residents be notified of the danger. This has not always happened and when it did, the notice was too late to be of help. During this past weekend, black particles were visible in the water following the outage, creating potential hazards to residents.
2. SLE Water has owned this system for over 30 years and has only provided a minimal amount of maintenance. They have not provided upgrades as needed for the increased number of homes it serves. It was not until a major outage in 2004 that DEQ found numerous issues with the system which did not meet standards. Since that time, SLE Water has been required to make major repairs at considerable cost. If the system had been properly managed and upgraded this cost would not have been as great and they would not need an increase to recoup their loss. Residents are sitting on a virtual time bomb of possible hazardous material in our water lines due to breaks in a poorly maintained system.
3. SLE Water has not provided sufficient back-up equipment in order to ensure potable water is available during and after all power outages. The present generator has not functioned during our power outages as evidenced during the weekend of December 15, 2006. The community was without water for nearly two days. In July 1998, the community was without water for three days. Again, in October 2004 the system was without water for 10 days while SLE Water searched the nation for a pump to replace the failed one. There have been several other instances which lasted for hours rather than days.
4. SLE Water has been subsidized by a parent company, Hansen Industries. If it no longer enjoys any subsidies from the parent company, we as consumers want a specific plan on how SLE Water is going to maintain and upgrade our system prior to a rate increase.
5. There was less than 6' of water in the reservoir when our past outage occurred. It drained so quickly we feel there must be leakages in the system. We as consumers deserve a full disclosure of the pumping rates in conjunction with leakage rates. This is vital to knowing if lines need replacing or repair.
6. It is our understanding Hansen Industries has hired an engineer from Welsh Comer Engineering. This firm performed a study of the system for needed upgrades and repairs.

