

The Comparative Value of Water



The July 2012 issue of *The Kansas Lifeline* contains two articles related to the value of water: “Who Will Determine What’s ‘Affordable Water’” by Pat McCool; and Setting a “Proper Water Rate” by Carl Brown. Both articles are well written and stimulated me to assess how Douglas County Rural Water District No. 1’s water rates compare with items that are purchased every day at the local Dillon’s Grocery Store.

I recognize that the price for some of the commodities fluctuate due to sales, customer demands, other market factors, and that prices vary between stores/stations and public water supply systems. However, you might find the following comparisons of interest.

RWD #1 Retail Water	\$7.40/1,000 gallons (1 gallon = 128 oz. or \$.0074, taxes included)
Gasoline	\$3,800/1,000 gallons (\$3.80 per gallon, taxes included)
Dillons Milk	\$2,990/1,000 gallons (\$2.99 per gallon)
Pepsi	\$4,580/1,000 (12 pack = 144 oz. @ \$5.15 or \$4.58/gallon)
Minute Maid Orange Juice	\$6,400/1,000 (119 oz. @ \$5.98 or \$6.40/gallon)
Dasani Bottled Water	\$4,850/1,000 (6 pack = 102 oz. @ \$3.85 or \$4.85/gallon)
Bud Light	\$10,050/1,000 (12 pack = 144 oz. @ \$11.29 or \$10.05/gallon)



While Douglas RWD No. 1 and the gasoline station include taxes (or fees) in the total cost of the product, soft drinks, orange juice, bottled water, and beer prices listed above do not include taxes – thus making the difference between those products and public water supplies even wider.

Safe, available, public water is a bargain beverage – and can cost-effectively be used to water the gardens, wash the car, make ice cubes and provide showers, and for a multitude of additional purposes.

While recognizing that consumers do not want to pay higher prices for any commodity, rural water districts and municipalities need to do a better job of promoting the value

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of their product, water. As local water suppliers and the State of Kansas look to the future, water availability and water quality will increasingly become topics of discussion.

Water quality problems in public water supply lakes, reservoirs, and rivers include: sediment, nutrient loads, blue-green algae, and other problems that close state lakes, pose health risks, affect taste and odor, and increase water treatment costs.

As public water supply systems and the State discuss water treatment, drought/flood protection, supply availability, and other issues related to water quality and quantity, we collectively must plan for the future to ensure adequate safe drinking water. Investments to protect our long-term water supplies – even if we doubled the cost per 1,000 gallons – will continue to leave water as the least expensive commodity per gallon consumed.

At July 20, 2012 prices, Douglas County Rural Water District No. 1 patrons receive 1,000 gallons of water for \$7.40. I know many systems have rates far less than our district has. But, for that same \$7.40, our water district patrons would receive: 2.20 gallons of gasoline, 2.47 gallons of milk, 1.62 gallons of soft drink, 1.16 gallons of orange juice, 1.53 gallons of bottled water, or .74 gallons of beer.

If the price of water to our customers doubled to \$14.40 per 1,000 gallons to help pay for State investments in protecting surface water supplies, our customers would still only be able to purchase 3.79 gallons of gasoline, 4.94 gallons of milk, 3.24 gallons of soft drink, 2.32 gallons of orange juice, 3.06 gallons of bottled water, or 1.48 gallons of beer for the same amount of money.

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As we discuss water rates and investments needed to safeguard our water supplies, it is important to keep in mind the value that public water systems provide to their customers. While we may not want to pay more to water our gardens, lawn, livestock, or to shower, make ice cubes, or drink, the absence of quality water in sufficient amounts to meet the public’s needs has much higher costs. We cannot cost-effectively substitute any of the other products for the public water supplies that rural water districts and municipalities provide every day.

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WHEN DO YOU SERVICE YOUR WATER STORAGE TANK?
 IF THE ANSWER IS "AFTER A PROBLEM"
 ...YOU'RE SPENDING TOO MUCH

- COATINGS
- CLEANING
- INSPECTIONS
- REPAIRS
- ACCESSORIES
- SERVICE
- CHLORINE RETENTION
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