



# Population Density & Laws at Romaldo Water

An important question was raised at a recent Romaldo Water meeting:

“As the population increases at the 12 Romaldo parcels, will Romaldo be required to invest in infrastructure and professional services to comply with state and local laws?”

This is a summary of state and local laws (the “**Standards**”) that pertain to this question. In December 2005 I spoke with **Norm Fujimoto** (Sr. Health Specialist) at the SB County Public Health Department (**SBPHD**), the primary agency that governs Romaldo. Norm spoke of four Standards that govern the Romaldo Well:

- California Laws<sup>1</sup>.
  - California Health & Safety Code
  - California Water Code
- California Code of Regulations<sup>2</sup>
- Santa Barbara County Ordinance 4181
- Santa Barbara County Code

All four Standards assign requirements using similar criteria. Regardless the SBPHD relies mostly on SB Ordinance 4181, which classifies Romaldo as a State Small Domestic Water System (**SSDWS**). Ordinance 4181 was recently codified in SB County Code:

*CHAPTER 34B DOMESTIC WATER SYSTEMS, Sec. 34B-2. Definitions.*

(21) “State small domestic water system” means a system for the provision of piped water...that serves...not more than fourteen service connections...and does not regularly serve more than an average of twenty-five individuals...

The SBPHD is primarily concerned with “service connections” rather than the limit of 25 individuals (already exceeded!). N. Fujimoto stated the likely scenario for exceeding the service connection limit is with non-attached “second units” defined in SB Code 34B-2:

*CHAPTER 34B DOMESTIC WATER SYSTEMS, Sec. 34B-2. Definitions.*

(23) “Water connection” means a water connection to a habitable dwelling unit...a water connection shall not mean a water connection to an attached second dwelling unit...

In other words each “non-attached second unit” will increase the number of service connections. The Romaldo permit (expires 2010) recognizes 12 service connections today, and if we exceed 14 we will be upgraded to a Domestic Water System (**DWS**). This would require changes including the hiring of a certified water professional (on a part time basis) and more rigorous and frequent testing of the well<sup>3</sup>. This will add at least \$3,000 per year in costs. Upgrades to the distribution system will be required at the well-head at a cost of \$10,000-\$25,000.

Links and/ or copies of referenced Standards are at the Romaldo website

(<http://romaldo.graphicengineering.com/romaldo/policies.asp>).

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<sup>1</sup> The laws are vague and require interpretation (e.g., by a judge, legislature, etc.) before they can be useful.

<sup>2</sup> The Code of Regulations consists of 28 titles, which are interpretations of the CA Law.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 4 (Section 116275) of Part 12 of Division 104 of the Health and Safety Code.

## ANALYSIS

Noteworthy trends will someday require Romaldo to be classified as a DWS, including:

- New home owners are increasingly relying on rental income (i.e., greater potential for detached units) to pay mortgages.
- Several residents have expressed interest in non-attached secondary units.
- The January 2005 *SB INLAND ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE III OF CHAPTER 35* encourages non-attached secondary units in our area as a way to prevent land from being “underutilized”.

At 12 service connections today we can add 2 more with little worry; however each new connection will bring substantial scrutiny from the county. This is because Romaldo must provide serviceability documentation with each new service connection, regardless of the number today. Also, more rigorous permit enforcement in our area could require Romaldo to register as a DWS with little warning. In 1978 a similar situation happened when the County threatened to sue Romaldo for lax standards. In any event this may be the time to start slowly preparing for the DWS days.

## RECOMMENDATION

A simple and sustainable way to mitigate the pressures<sup>4</sup> of an increased population density is to tie rates solely to usage. The current structure offers lower rates to parcels with the highest number of users. When taken to the extreme, this structure would collect less money as the population increases.

Towards this goal I propose the following changes to the rates:

1. Eliminate the “repair assessment”, and charge one base rate of \$60.00. Today the effective base rate is \$60.00.
2. Eliminate the number of residents as a factor and keep the base rate at 2000 ft<sup>3</sup>. Charge \$0.05/ft<sup>3</sup> for usage between 2000-4000 ft<sup>3</sup> and \$0.075/ft<sup>3</sup> for usage above 4000 ft<sup>3</sup>. This will increase reserves by \$500-\$1000/yr.
3. Households may limit a bill to \$250.00 (once per year) if it can be demonstrated that a line-break occurred. Approval will be limited to majority vote, via write-in campaign on the next billing period (see attached “Proposed Bill”).
4. Miscellaneous changes (see the attached)

Regards,



Bill Hurst  
President, Romaldo Water

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<sup>4</sup> Romaldo reserves are ~\$14,000. Based on 2004-2005 usage Romaldo saves ~\$3,000/yr, after bills and repairs. A reasonable reserve-goal to meet future needs is ~\$25,000.

Proposed Bill

# Romaldo Community Water Company

WATER BILLING FOR THE TWO MONTH PERIOD ENDING \_\_\_\_\_

5587- HURST/ LOVE

PRESENT READING \_\_\_\_\_  
 PREVIOUS READING \_\_\_\_\_  
 AMOUNT OVER BASE (2000 FT<sup>3</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_

0-2000 FT <sup>3</sup>		\$60.00
2000-4000	(\$0.05 X FT <sup>3</sup> )	\$
4000-	(\$0.075 X FT <sup>3</sup> )	\$
NON-REGISTERING METER/ LATE PAYMENT (\$25.00)		\$
TOTAL		\$

Sign this box if you approve limiting the payment of the water bill for XXXX WCC to \$250.00 due to a line blowout.

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PLEASE READ YOUR METER ON OR ABOUT \_\_\_\_\_

HURST/ LOVE                      METER READ\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RETURN THIS SLIP WITH YOUR PAYMENT TO:

ROMALDO COMMUNITY WATER COMPANY  
 C/O RON BUZARD  
 5645 WEST CAMINO CIELO  
 SANTA BARBARA, CA 93105