

**From:** [PUCWeb Notification](#)  
**To:** [Jan Noriyuki](#)  
**Subject:** Notice: A comment was submitted to PUCWeb  
**Date:** Thursday, January 19, 2023 12:00:07 PM

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The following comment was submitted via PUCWeb:

Name: Rick Prindle  
Submission Time: Jan 19 2023 11:55AM  
Email: [prindlerichard@icloud.com](mailto:prindlerichard@icloud.com)  
Telephone: 661-644-0167  
Address: 29159 n silver meadows loop  
Athol, ID 83801

Name of Utility Company: Bitterroute

Case ID: GSW-W-22-01

Comment: "When I moved here in 2013 I was never made aware of any water issues in this area. I only found out about all the water problems after I had purchased my home. I paid top dollar & then some for my property. I would have moved to another tract if I knew then what I know now. We have a huge aquifer ( rathdrum/ prairie) & lots of water in north idaho. Not sure why it is so hard to provide a simple service to people on this particular system. I am on the north end of the loop & our water pressure is about 40 lbs. Every year when I have my sprinklers blown out the technician tells me it's the worst water pressure in the whole area. Some of the problems we have had over the years is they just shut off the water with no notice. When I drive down to the corner to see if anyone is fixing our pump nobody is there. Hours later they are pulling out all the pipe & pump & doing repairs. From what I have gathered our system is outdated. They have added several customers/ homes & never updated the system. My suggestion is they add a bigger pump/ larger pipes to get more volume & or pressure. Also maybe they could split the system & add another pump to get better service to us on the north end. We also need a automatic transfer switch to run the generator when the power is out. Most people would not mind paying a reasonable amount for water if we had good water pressure & or service. I only water about 3/4 to 1 acre of lawn. At this rate hike they are asking for I will not be able to afford to keep my lawn green. I am sure you have heard also that most of us are all retired & on fixed incomes. I also am not able to work anymore to earn more income. I strongly hope that as the commissioners you will look out for us as consumers. One last thing is I have several friends that have moved to the area & have never encountered any of the problems that we have. Thank you so much for listening to our concerns. Sincerely Rick & Kim Prindle."

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**From:** [PUCWeb Notification](#)  
**To:** [Jan Noriyuki](#)  
**Subject:** Notice: A comment was submitted to PUCWeb  
**Date:** Friday, January 20, 2023 12:00:07 PM

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The following comment was submitted via PUCWeb:

Name: John Balbi  
Submission Time: Jan 20 2023 11:14AM  
Email: [johnb@webeefelting.com](mailto:johnb@webeefelting.com)  
Telephone: 208-623-2587  
Address: 31772 N. Kelso Dr.  
Spirit Lake, ID 83869

Name of Utility Company: Gem State Water Co.

Case ID: GSW-W-22-01

Comment: "Gem State Water reads meters 4-5 year. Does not seem to be too much of inconvenience. Past water Co's have been doing that for over 25 years. As far as billing a simple software program can bring up the customer information and correct billing with the customer number included on the return billing stub or written on the check. "

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**From:** [PUCWeb Notification](#)  
**To:** [Jan Noriyuki](#)  
**Subject:** Notice: A comment was submitted to PUCWeb  
**Date:** Wednesday, January 18, 2023 5:00:56 PM

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The following comment was submitted via PUCWeb:

Name: darrell richardson  
Submission Time: Jan 18 2023 4:48PM  
Email: dhrichar@gmail.com  
Telephone: 208-216-9354  
Address: 32093 N. Tahoe Dr.  
spirit lake, ID 83869

Name of Utility Company: Gem State Water Company

Case ID: GSW-W-22-01

Comment: "Sir/Madam, This is mostly a repeat of my testimony at the Athol hearing. The rate request by Gem State Water Co (GSWC) does not look like a good faith attempt to balance desires for profit vs cost to customers. FYI, I'm in the spirit lake east distribution network but what I'm saying broadly would be the same for other local GSWC networks. Our last rate increase appears per the GSWC docs to have been in 2013. Since then inflation has been 27% (per google). My requested base rate increase is 40% and my excess rate increase is > 100%. Looking at last years usage as a guide, my cumulative expenses under the new rates would be up 55%. There is nothing in the documentation showing I would get better value for the payments exceeding inflation. The proportions of water billing is changing to be much more more punitive to excess beyond the base amount. That water is what I use to provide a green belt around my house for fire protection and to mitigate grocery bills by having a garden (on a drip system). Going through the accounting numbers provided by GSWC really made me feel the request was an attempt to gouge. Where is the projected income based on historical usage using the new rates? How could one possibly ask for such an increase without that as justification? There is only 1 years data presented so we have no idea if that year was a aberration or not, but it was used as the base to justify the increase. In it there was a major purchase of a truck representing about 25% of the income under-run. It was paid in full, not as a down payment and monthly payment. As such, being incorporated in the rate raise will mean it gets covered IN FULL every year from here on to infinity. Not just the one time it was purchased. That comes across as functionally cooking the books by making the apparent annual recovery needs higher than they really are. There is an attempt to shift different water systems into different payment rate increases using the term 'equity' to make it appear that we are having all people pay their fair amount to support GSWC. I have no idea how to judge if Spirit Lake is paying too much relative to Bitterroot, and don't really know why one group should subsidize another just due to the whim of the new owner. At any rate GSWC didn't justify why their apportionment across water systems or between big and little users made sense. It just wasn't even written up. Putting through a huge rate increase while shifting the %base vs %excess, Bumping up each water system by different amounts. Shifting how much small vs big users will be billed, not having a projection (although surely they did one to come up with these numbers), all makes this monopoly situation very opaque. This is all exactly backwards from how a company should be asking it's base for more money. It lacks good faith and courtesy. One comment particularly set the tone for me. A customer benefit was claimed

of making the tariff rate clearer to us. What?? It was base rate and excess, in the future it will be base rate and excess. Nothing has changed except the numbers. It feels like spreading feel good words with no actual value behind them. Please reject this rate case. A 27% increase, matching inflation, would be acceptable if apportioned equally within a network, 27% to base rate, 27% to excess, 27% to small user, 27% to large user, until such time as they present a case justified by proper documentation and consultation."

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Jan Noriyuki Commission Secretary  
Idaho Public Utilities Commission  
PO Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720-0074

Re: GSW-W-22-01: In the matter of the Application of Gem State Water Company, LLC for an Order Authorizing increase in the Company's Rates and Charges for Water Service in the State of Idaho.

Dear Commission Secretary Noriyuki,

This is in reference to Gem State Water Company application filed with the Idaho Public Utilities Commission to increase the Terms, Rates and Charges for Water Service. Most residents received what we assume is the required Notice from the Gem State Water, (hereafter referred to herein as Applicant). However, the information contained therein appears incomplete. They provide a chart with the proposed rates indicating it is necessary for, "...operating and maintaining the water systems which have escalated in recent years." They then make the brazen statement that it will, "...increase the Company's revenues by \$402,000 which represents an increase in the Company's revenues by 69%. There is also the statement that the proposed raise in rates is for funding the Applicants consolidation and aligning the different systems into one.

In reviewing the application on the PUC website, it is concerning there are additional requests the Applicant failed to disclose. Specifically, the decrease in the minimum customer volume from 15,000 to 10,000 with the increase in charge per 1000 gallons after reaching the lesser minimum customer volume. These two items are rather important. Were we going to be notified of this? Is this not a requirement of the PUC to notify those who use the system of "all" intended changes contained in the Application? This is an obvious intentional failure of the Applicant to notify customers.

A few other points concerning their request to note:

1. Failure of the Applicant in their "Notice to Gen Stat Water Company Customers" to disclose their intentions of reducing the customer minimum by 5,000 gal and increasing the 1000 gal overage.
2. An increase in rates for funding the Applicants consolidation and aligning the different systems into one. This should be the responsibility of Gem State Water not those who are serviced by them.
3. When the Bitterroot system was purchased by Applicant, several improvements that were to take place. Have they been completed? I do know they claimed they upgraded the generator which would prevent the water system from going down during a power failure. This has not been done to our knowledge, as it still requires someone to go to the site to start the emergency back-up system.
4. Water usage in the winter months, usually October through April/May, when the meters are not accessible due to snow, we are charged the minimum monthly fee. During these months the water usage is normally minimal as there is no yard or garden watering. However, if you do not reach that minimum usage we have never received a refund. During these low usage months are we paying for water we don't use? Once the meters are read shouldn't the customer be credited for any amount not used?

5. New homes and businesses are being serviced by Gem State Water. Who pays for the hook up fee, labor, time and equipment upgrade to provide the service for these new homes? Impact fees?
6. Water pressure is an issue and more so now that there are additional properties pulling from this system. It has also created fire prevention issues at some of the outlying areas as there is not sufficient water pressure to those fire hydrants to protect the homes. They have been on notice for this issue for several years following the loss of a neighborhood home where it was necessary for the fire department to bring in a pumper truck to produce enough water pressure to put out the fire.
7. Customer service is an issue. Our bills are sporadic.
8. Many residents are retired seniors living on a fixed income. Most are struggling with the state of the economy. This request from Applicant to increase their total revenues by just short of a half million dollars is repulsive and greedy.
9. Opposed to the request to decrease the minimum allowed from 15,000 to 10,000. Many families have livestock and this would be detrimental to those as well as an additional hardship financially. Also opposed to the increase in the per 1000 gal overage charge.

With the above in mind, we are hereby requesting the Application by Gem State be denied in its entirety.

Thank you.

Tom & Stephanie Gossard

Jim & Patty Tomlinson

Rich & Kim Prindle

Joe Baumann

Debbie Funk

Dale Fitzgerald

Mike & Linda Mallory

Paul & Deborah Skinner

Greg & Melanie Vander Feer

Rick & Debbie Wright

Doug & Shelly Thaxton

Ryan & Wendy Vander Feer

Beth Washabaugh

Silver Meadows Loop (Bitter Root)

**From:** [PUCWeb Notification](#)  
**To:** [Jan Noriyuki](#)  
**Subject:** Notice: A comment was submitted to PUCWeb  
**Date:** Friday, January 20, 2023 4:00:05 PM

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The following comment was submitted via PUCWeb:

Name: Judy Aviles  
Submission Time: Jan 20 2023 3:21PM  
Email: [aviles-judy@outlook.com](mailto:aviles-judy@outlook.com)  
Telephone: 208-770-0558  
Address: 35552 N. St. Joe Dr.  
Spirit Lake, ID 83869

Name of Utility Company: Gem State Water

Case ID: GSW-W-22-01

Comment: "It is unethical to gauge the innocent public with excessive rate changes. In almost 19 years, we have not exceeded the amount of water allotted us. Originally it was 9 thousand gallons, then came a new owner, and a rate increase plus 1000 gallons less. We live in Spirit Lake East, we are on SSI as our income, and do not need more water or a much higher payment rate. Big conglomerates do not need more money, they just need to learn to live within their means like the rest of us do."

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**From:** [PUCWeb Notification](#)  
**To:** [Jan Noriyuki](#)  
**Subject:** Notice: A comment was submitted to PUCWeb  
**Date:** Friday, January 20, 2023 7:00:16 AM

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The following comments were submitted via PUCWeb:

Name: Stephanie Gossard  
Submission Time: Jan 19 2023 5:28PM  
Email: [jlmslegal@gmail.com](mailto:jlmslegal@gmail.com)  
Telephone: 208-683-0828  
Address: 28239 N Silver Meadows Lp  
Athol, ID 83801-8726

Name of Utility Company: Stephanie Gossard

Case ID: GSW-W-22-01

Comment: "January 19, 2023 Jan Noriyuki Commission Secretary Idaho Public Utilities Commission PO Box 83720 Boise, ID 83720-0074 Re: GSW-W-22-01: In the matter of the Application of Gem State Water Company, LLC for an Order Authorizing increase in the Company's Rates and Charges for Water Service in the State of Idaho. Dear Commission Secretary Noriyuki, This is in reference to Gem State Water Company application filed with the Idaho Public Utilities Commission to increase the Terms, Rates and Charges for Water Service. Most residents received what we assume is the required Notice from the Gem State Water, (hereafter referred to herein as Applicant). However, the information contained therein appears incomplete. They provide a chart with the proposed rates indicating it is necessary for, "...operating and maintaining the water systems which have escalated in recent years." They then make the brazen statement that it will, "...increase the Company's revenues by \$402,000 which represents an increase in the Company's revenues by 69%. There is also the statement that the proposed raise in rates is for funding the Applicants consolidation and aligning the different systems into one. In reviewing the application on the PUC website, it is concerning there are additional requests the Applicant failed to disclose. Specifically, the decrease in the minimum customer volume from 15,000 to 10,000 with the increase in charge per 1000 gallons after reaching the lesser minimum customer volume. These two items are rather important. Were we going to be notified of this? Is this not a requirement of the PUC to notify those who use the system of "all" intended changes contained in the Application? This is an obvious intentional failure of the Applicant to notify customers. A few other points concerning their request to note: 1. Failure of the Applicant in their "Notice to Gen Stat Water Company Customers" to disclose their intentions of reducing the customer minimum by 5,000 gal and increasing the 1000 gal overage. 2. An increase in rates for funding the Applicants consolidation and aligning the different systems into one. This should be the responsibility of Gem State Water not those who are serviced by them. 3. When the Bitterroot system was purchased by Applicant, several improvements that were to take place. Have they been completed? I do know they claimed they upgraded the generator which would prevent the water system from going down during a power failure. This has not been done to our knowledge, as it still requires someone to go to the site to start the emergency back-up system. 4. Water usage in the winter months, usually October through April/May, when the meters are not accessible due to snow, we are charged the minimum monthly fee. During these months the water usage is normally minimal as there is no yard or garden watering. However, if you



do not reach that minimum usage, we have never received a refund. During these low usage months are we paying for water we don't use? Once the meters are read shouldn't the customer be credited for any amount not used? 5. New homes and businesses are being serviced by Gem State Water. Who pays for the hook up fee, labor, time and equipment upgrade to provide the service for these new homes? Impact fees? 6. Water pressure is an issue and more so now that there are additional properties pulling from this system. It has also created fire prevention issues at some of the outlying areas as there is not sufficient water pressure to those fire hydrants to protect the homes. They have been on notice for this issue for several years following the loss of a neighborhood home where it was necessary for the fire department to bring in a pumper truck to produce enough water pressure to put out the fire. 7. Customer service is an issue. Our bills are sporadic. 8. Many residents are retired seniors living on a fixed income. Most are struggling with the state of the economy. This request from Applicant to increase their total revenues by just short of a half million dollars is repulsive and greedy. 9. Opposed to the request to decrease the minimum allowed from 15,000 to 10,000. Many families have livestock and this would be detrimental to those as well as an additional hardship financially. Also opposed to the increase in the per 1000 gal overage charge. With the above in mind, we are hereby requesting the Application by Gem State be denied in its entirety. Thank you. Tom & Stephanie Gossard Jim & Patty Tomlinson Rich & Kim Prindle Joe Baumann Debbie Funk Dale Fitzgerald Mike & Linda Mallory Paul & Deborah Skinner Greg & Melanie Vander Feer Rick & Debbie Wright Doug & Shelly Thaxton Ryan & Wendy Vander Feer Beth Washabaugh Paul & Jamie Wise Jason Kuenkler Kevin & Joan Peterson Brian & Geri Patton Cathy Colby Residents of Silver Meadows Loop Bitterroot Water "

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