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Subject: Island park water

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My name is Ron Carr. We have had a family cabin at Aspen Ridge subdivision for 23 years. I have been following the water problem with Island Park Water Company and have some questions and concerns about what is happening. In the years that we have owned our cabin, there have been only a few times (3) that I can remember that boil water orders were issued. When this happened, there were signs posted at all the main loops streets and one time had a personal notice on my door. These were usually posted due to some construction project where some contractor broke the line or was hooking up a new cabin.

There have been only three times that we have had water line freeze-ups and that was in the spring. There are plastic pipes in the ground and really no way to thaw them until the weather warms up. While this is definitely an inconvenience, it was not something we could not deal with. We have other experiences with cabins we have used and had the same problems and these cabins had their own wells. While I understand it is a major problem for the Short-Term Rentals it should be somewhat expected when you are in the high mountain locations. There was also cable line construction done last summer that cut across the roads in several places. Every time the soil is disturbed it allows more moisture to pass through it and increases the potential for a line to freeze. It is still evident this summer when walking down the roads in the morning the cross cuts are visible from the extra moisture. As to the fines from the DEQ, I feel they are quite extreme for the problems that we have experienced. The information I have read says that Island Park Water has about 300 customers. Our fees are only \$280.00 per year. That would only come to about \$85,000 per year income if everyone paid. IPW is being fined \$435,000.00. This would take over five years just to pay the fines without paying any of the cost to run the water system. This is not a really high- income business for anyone. It has been projected that to bring the system up to DEQ standards, it would cost over 5 million dollars and that our water rates would be \$200.00 per month. For the service IPW provides, \$280 per year is a great deal. It also is not fair to the family cabin owners who only use their cabin a few months out of the year compared to the Short-term rentals that are in use 10 months or more with usually more people than just a family and yet pay the same price. The water system was designed for family cabins, not the business of short-term rentals. If the upgrade is put in place, it may force some family cabins out or make them also become a rental. The other option would be for everyone to have to put in their own private well. Would three hundred new wells in our area be a good idea? A well would also cost each cabin owner \$25,000 to \$30,000 dollars to drill with no assurance the well may be useable. I know of one cabin that drilled a well last year and the water was not useable. A community system is a much better way for everyone.

It has also been proposed that maybe some big business would buy out the Island Park Water Company. I don't think there are very many businesses would be interested in buying the system with a 5 million dollar plus investment and even with the \$200.00 a month fee. It would take 7 years to pay it off with no interest or operating costs.

The DEQ has seemed to me to have some type of agenda, something to prove or a vendetta against Island Park Water Company instead of being willing to help them out. First of all was the water line freeze up for some cabins. In reality, how does one find a frozen line under three to four feet of snow

and frozen ground? I am sure if there was a way, IPWC would have gladly fixed the problem. Then the same thing with a water line leak on one street. How does one locate a leak under snow and frozen ground? Leaks are difficult enough to find in the summer.

The next major problem was with E.coli: contamination on one street at Aspen Ridge. A boil order was placed on all of the subdivisions that IPW supplies water. This was questionable to me as each the other sites have their own wells and piping systems. One is about four miles north of Aspen Ridge and the other subdivisions are 10 to 15 miles away from Aspen Ridge. Was there any E.coli: present in their systems? Was there any test preformed? I am not aware of anything stating if this was done ore not. If there is E.coli: present in each of these systems, then most private wells should also be contaminated. In one of the DEQ statements it showed pictures of IPW noncompliance with water lines being above the ground. These pictures were of one inch poly and were not any part of the IPW system. The DEQ have made several other statements which I feel are very questionable and could be challenged. Here again, rather than being helpful, they are just proposing fines for their findings. One must question what the ultimate goal is. If the goal is for clean, reliable, affordable water, why are the residents receiving emails boasting of "Our lawsuit is nasty and backed by the governor s office and filed by the attorney general", but little or nothing is discussed in terms of solutions nor evidence of continued issues or comprehensive testing.

From the information I have received from several cabin owners, not all streets on Aspen Ridge have tested positive for E. coli. The water from the well has been tested and is clear of any E. coli bacteria. Maybe the problem is just on the one street and could actually be from some cabin owner's system and not the IPW system. I have requested reports from the DEQ as to where and when water samples were taken and what results were found but have not yet been informed. I have also offered my water hydrant as a test site as it is close to the end of the water system to the west of the wells. Overall, I feel that there is quite a bit of unfair treatment being given to IPW over these problems. The water system has been quite reliable over the years we have been there, and I have had numerous guest comment on the quality of our water. The price of IPW water is more than reasonable for the service provided. I understand the Short-Term rentals position that this is detrimental to their business, but the system was built just for family cabins. When we bought our property, we were told STR's were not permitted, but evidently that was not true. It is also not fair to family cabin owners who just have a cabin to share with their family to pay the same amount for water as the Short-Term rentals who use more water and for a longer period of time. I feel most of the problem has ballooned because of the Short-Term rentals and the involvement of the DEQ. I know we all want clean, dependable and affordable water. I also know that IPW would like to supply and maintain an affordable system, but the fines and demands from the DEQ will definitely not help any of the cabin owners out in the long run.